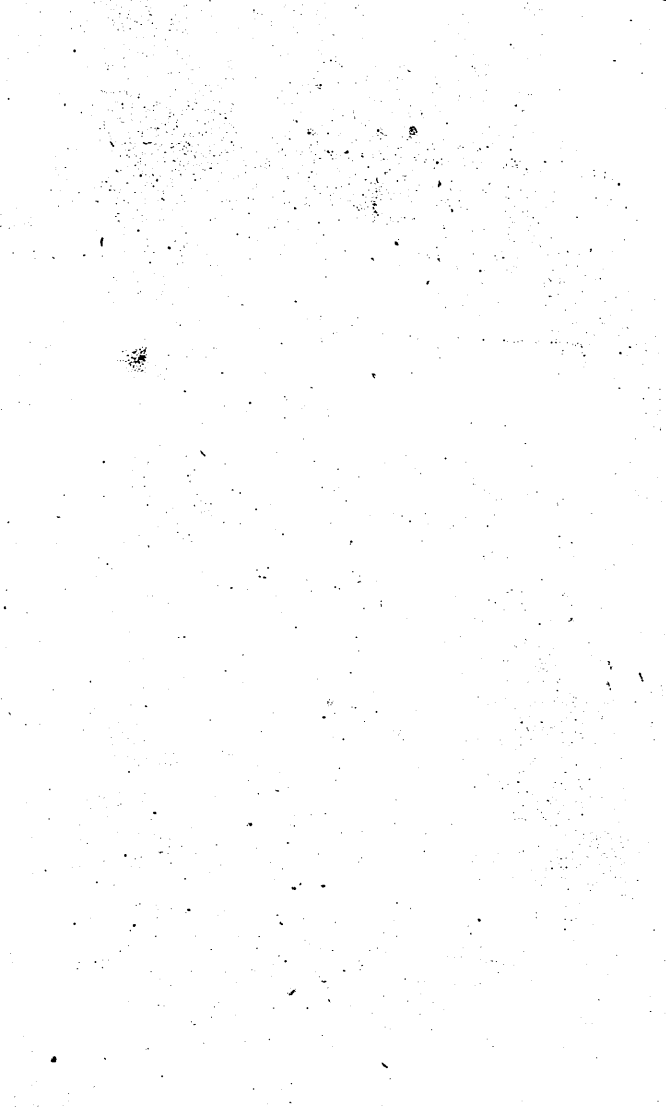


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FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

Guide to the Sacraments.

BY

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"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus
Christ."—1 John, i. 3.

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Introduction.

THIS little work has been prepared for the Evangelical Knowledge Society, with the hope that it may prove an instrument of blessing to the church, and to the souls of many. It contains the substance of that instruction on the subject of the sacraments, which the author has been accustomed to give in an oral form to the many souls committed to his charge, for the thirty years past. He has been mercifully allowed to bring many, he might say indeed many hundreds, to the Table of the Lord. He has been permitted to see great religious prosperity attend the churches which the Lord has placed under his ministry. Among these many seals of the Lord's goodness to him, many have solicited him to prepare a compendium of the instruction which they had received from him, like the present. It has often been in his mind to do it, when other pressing engagements have forbidden the accomplish-

ment of the purpose. He has now at last been permitted to complete the design. The work is prepared in a familiar, practical, and personal style of address. It contains that which in private conversation or lecturing, he would say to any who inquired of the subjects here treated. He means it to be a guide to a sound and edifying view and use of the sacraments, which may be made to take the place of such conversation, and which both he and his brethren may put into the hands of those who seek instruction upon these subjects, with confidence and hope of a divine blessing. He commends it to his brethren with all the confidence which their knowledge of his ministry and his views may inspire, in the hope and belief, that God will be pleased to own and bless it, to the guidance and comfort of many souls. And he looks forward with great joy and lively hope to that work of teaching and establishing the truth, as our church declares it, which he is confident the Society that is now so vigorously publishing this and kindred books, is appointed to accomplish.

S. H. T.

ST. GEORGE'S RECTORY, May 1, 1854.

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Fellowship with Christ.

I.

ITS NATURE.

FELLOWSHIP is joint participation, partnership, communion,—enjoyment of this partnership, in the privileges and benefits which it brings. The Christian's state is fellowship with God,—fellowship with God as a Father in Jesus Christ. This is his present state. This will be his everlasting state. He shall never perish, for his Father is greater than all,—and no one is able to pluck him out of his Father's hands. He has also a real enjoyment of this state,—a blessed consciousness of it,—so that it is an actual state, and he can say “Truly my fel-

lowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

1. This is a fellowship of God with him. It is the gift of God to him. He was once far off. But he has been brought nigh to God by the blood of Jesus Christ. He was alienated from God by nature,—and an enemy to him by wicked works. But he has been reconciled through the Saviour's death in the body of his flesh. He was condemned, and under the just anger of God. But the Son of God hath been made a curse in his stead. He hath borne his sins in his own body on the tree. He hath been made a sin-offering instead of guilty man,—that man might be made the righteousness of God through him. God has thus reconciled the guilty man to himself. He has blotted out his transgressions, and presented him holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight, in the obedience and death of his own dear Son. Now man has God's fellowship with him, and has received from God, the word of reconciliation. •He has a present state of peace

with God, which is no more to be broken. God is his Father and his Friend. God will be his Father and his Friend forever. God hath justified him freely through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. And there is no more condemnation to him because he is in Christ. Whom He hath justified, them He hath also glorified. And nothing shall separate them from that love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. This is God's fellowship with man. It is the divine gift to the Christian man. God is no longer an enemy to him, but is one with him through the gift of his Son for him. God loves him, meets him in peace, unites with him, walks with him, works with him, and of his own grace, bestows upon him this blessed gift of everlasting fellowship with him, in his Son.

2. It is man's fellowship with God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the mind and heart of man. Because God has fellowship with him, he has adopted him as a son,—and has sent forth the spirit of his Son into his

heart, teaching him to love him as a Father, and to call him Father. This divine Spirit has awakened him from his carelessness, has convinced him of sin, has given him a true repentance, and has enabled him to believe in Christ to the saving of his soul. The Spirit has thus converted him from the error of his way to God. He has given him a new heart, and a new spirit, and transformed him in the renewing of his mind. Now he is no longer an enemy to God—or a wanderer from God,—or a rebel against God. He is now one with God, reconciled in his heart to God, loving him, and desiring to serve him, obey him, and enjoy him forever. His fellowship with sin and the world and Satan, is broken off. He has a fellowship with God, and it is his delight and effort to maintain it, and carry it out,—and to walk with and live under its influence. Being led by the Spirit of God, he is now a child of God. The Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit. He has a blessed consciousness and enjoyment of this reconciliation. Old things

have passed away—all things have become new—and his part, his concord, his communion, the agreement of his heart, are with Christ. And he now walks with God his Saviour, in newness of life. By this one Spirit he has access to the Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. This fellowship with God is maintained by the same power of the Spirit of God dwelling within him. He leads him to make a solemn dedication of himself to God,—a faithful secret covenant with God. In his own closet he is led to give up his heart to the Saviour's possession, and to the Saviour's service, really, spiritually, consciously. He feels himself no longer his own. He is bought with a price, and he would glorify God in his body and his spirit, which are his. Everything connected with the Lord's service, becomes now a pleasure, and an attraction to him. He is led to be habitual in prayer, deeply interested in the word of God, finding enjoyment in the worship of God, and in the assemblies of his people. His thankful heart rejoices in the Lord. His watchful spirit

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fears the power of sin. His gratitude to Christ leads him to labor for the welfare of others. He desires to possess, and to display the mind of Christ, in every relation in which he is placed. He loves to think of the Lord who hath become his salvation. His meditations of him are pleasant to his heart. With joy he draws the living water out of the wells of salvation. As he has received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he strives to walk in him, in all things adorning his doctrine, and magnifying his grace. He thus cultivates and maintains that spiritual mind which is life and peace. This is the work of the Holy Spirit within him. This is the way in which God brings the heirs of salvation to glory. Thus he prepares his children for himself. Thus they make their calling and election sure. By the work of faith, and patience of hope, and labor of love, they manifest their election of God. God maintains his fellowship with them, by the unchangeable purpose of his grace, and the unfailing word of his promise. And they

maintain their fellowship with God, by the unceasing power of the Holy Spirit who dwells with them, and walks with them, and continually renews and strengthens them. God becomes their God,—and they become his people. And this is forever ;—an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

4. This is a fellowship in glorious blessings. The parties in it are partners in an inheritance of everlasting glory. There has been a mutual interchange of the property of each. There is a gracious participation in the final property of the partnership thus formed. Guilty man had nothing but guilt and condemnation. He was without life, dead in sin. This fearful load of guilt was laid upon Christ. Its responsibility was assumed by him. Its condemnation was imputed to him. He endured it, completely, finally, triumphantly. Thus all that man had was laid upon Christ. And he hath borne his griefs, and carried his sorrows. He hath been wounded for man's transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities. This has been

a perfect transfer of guilt and condemnation, taking it off from man, who possessed it, and would have sunk under it, and putting it upon Christ who was completely innocent of it, but could bear it and atone for it. There has been an equally real transfer of the perfect obedience of Christ to guilty man,—justifying the ungodly,—and imputing righteousness without works, even the righteousness of God, by faith, to those who believe. All the merit of the Saviour's work is given to man,—all its rewards and attainments are given freely to man—all the glory which it has deserved and purchased is bestowed upon man. The sinner is thus completely justified in Christ, and with Christ, and because Christ is justified. He is a partaker with Christ. Personally poor and destitute. In partnership, rich and glorified. In himself a sinful worm. In Christ an heir of God, and a fellow-citizen with the saints. In this fellowship, he is a joint heir with Christ, of a kingdom which cannot be removed. He has the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to dwell

with him forever. He is thus a partaker of everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. God has become his God,—and has provided for him a city of everlasting habitation. These are the blessings which constitute the substance of this fellowship with God. All that God can give to man,—all that man's nature is competent to receive,—is secured to the Christian in this fellowship, in an everlasting covenant. And all things are his, because he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Who can estimate the blessings of this union,—the blessedness of this condition? What want remains unsupplied? What defect is there in man's condition to be met? How rich, how full, how abounding in mercies, is this state of grace! Happy are the people who know the joyful sound. Happy are the people whose God is the Lord. God has said unto their souls, I am thy salvation. And in the blessed experience of his renewing and comforting Spirit, they can say, “and truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

II.

ITS OUTWARD TOKENS.

1. THE experience of this fellowship with Christ, leads to *a desire to express it*. There are fruits of holiness and usefulness which necessarily grow out of it. They are its evidences and proofs. They consist in all the attributes of moral excellence, which can appertain to the character of man. Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, in all the conduct and relations of man, are the results of this spiritual state and condition of the Christian man. They flow from his renewed heart, as streams from a fountain. They grow upon his character, as fruit upon the branches of a tree. They are the constant, living products of the unfailing living principle within. Wherever he is, and

whoever he is, the Spirit which dwelleth within him—the Spirit of the living God, will enable him to show the result of the divine workmanship upon his soul in this outward manifestation. He will walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing: The whole course and character of his life will be holy, and honorable to the Saviour, who has chosen him for himself, and loved him with an everlasting love.

2. But beyond these spiritual habitual fruits, which the Christian's life displays, his love for his Saviour will desire to express itself in some special *tokens* of the relation he bears to Him. He must utter and exhibit, in distinct expressions, the grateful and submissive feeling of his heart. If love be denied an utterance adapted to its desires, it languishes and dies. This desire leads to a wish for outward ordinances of religion, which would of necessity invent them, if none had been appointed. Man would have his own will-worship, if God had not prescribed a divine system of worship for him. The actual ordinances of the Gospel are never, there-

fore, to such a mind,—a line of prescribed duty, to which it feels obliged to be conformed, but a gracious system of permission and privilege, which meets and provides for the very feelings with which it is actuated and filled. It turns from a fellowship with the world and sin, to embrace with gladness the permission to avow, in appointed, positive, ordinances and rites of observance, its real love for Christ, and its sincere desire to serve and obey him.

3. The *necessity* for these outward positive ordinances and institutions of the Gospel, is in this very condition of man. Christian hearts must unite in outward visible fellowship with each other, and in mutual testimonies of their common choice and love for their divine Lord. Ordinances,—positive, arbitrary observances,—are the indispensable bonds and signs of an outward community of men. No human society can be maintained without them. They are the appointed expressions of the distinctive and separating principles which constitute the association, which form at once the basis of its

union in itself, and the ground of its division from others. Christian character may exist in individuals, by the simple work of the Spirit on the individual heart. But a Christian society cannot exist in the midst of a world whereof it is but a part, and the influence of which is not on its side, or for its promotion, but with outward ordinances of separation and communion. Thus only can the people of God effectually encourage and support each other, in the service in which they are together engaged. Thus only can the servants of Christ be marked or known, in their witnessing for him in the world, and their severance from the world. Should we give up our observance of the Saviour's own appointments for his people, we must adopt other rites of observance in their stead, or the Christian body must perish, and each servant of God suppose himself alone, in the midst of a world opposed to the choice and purpose of his heart. Like the prophet Elijah, he would find himself without encouragement or co-operation ; those who

were likeminded with him, would be all concealed from his knowledge; and life itself would become wearisome and a burden, from his total inability to contend with surrounding evil alone.

4. These outward ordinances are therefore *signs*, or *tokens* of our fellowship with Christ, and our fellowship with each other in Christ. They are outward expressions, in a selected and prescribed form, of our inward actual state of mind. They are external positive testimonies and assurances, of the previous inward work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. Thus we think, thus we feel, thus we choose, thus we desire, thus we purpose, and thus we avow and express it. They are signs,—not to God our Saviour, for he perfectly understands and knows the real state of our hearts, and needs no such testimony from us,—not to ourselves, for we are perfectly conscious of our own feelings and purpose, and know the sincerity and integrity of our designs,—but to our fellow-men, who have no divine ability to search our

hearts, and cannot know what we feel or think, but by our outward avowal of that which is unseen within us.

5. They are signs to our *fellow-Christians*, the members of the household of faith, proclaiming to them our union with them in the family of God, and encouraging them in the work in which they are engaged for Him,—both the work of holiness in their own hearts, and the work of outward usefulness in the church and the world abroad. We thus hold up each other in the path of duty, and strengthen each other in the fight of faith. The weak are animated by the presence of the strong; and the strong are encouraged and quickened by the necessities of the weak. This makes a communion of gifts,—a partnership in privileges. And each member of the family becomes an help, and a remembrancer to every other one. Thus all are bound together, as one loaf and one body. The saved are added to the church, and the church rejoices over the saved. And the whole body, by this effectual

working in the measure of every part, continually increaseth to the edifying of itself in love.

6. They are signs to the *world* around. They are expressions of our choice of Christ, and avowals of our separation from unconverted and guilty men. We thus proclaim the hope we have embraced. We thus confess, before men, the Saviour whom we have chosen. We thus come out and separate ourselves from the world, and declare our pursuit of the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. These ordinances constitute the signs and marks of our Christian profession. We do not mean that they are only this. They are much more. But they are this. They are the tokens to the world, from which we have been chosen, of our faith in the death of our Lord, as the foundation of our hope, and of our choice of the service of our Lord, as the everlasting enjoyment of our life. They thus constitute a constant testimony against the world,—a continually repeated ad-

monition to the worldly,—an abiding witness to Christ in his authority, and for Christ in his claims, and of Christ in his acts of grace and mercy, in the midst of a world which still rejects him, and refuses to acknowledge or to seek the shelter which he proposes.

7. Beyond this, however, they are also *tokens* of our *remembrance* of our Lord,—to our Lord himself. While absent from each other, in visible fellowship, we have appointed ordinances, as signs of remembrance, for him. They are commemorations of His love, and testimonies of our own remembrance of that love. Just as earthly friends in their temporary separation from each other, exchange their mutual tokens of remembrance, and faithfully observe them and employ them, to express and testify their mutual love in personal absence, so do we employ these appointed celebrations, as tokens of our remembrance for Him. Not as signs to give him information of that which he could not otherwise know, but as expressions of the state of our own mind

and heart, which are to act upon ourselves, not upon him; to keep him in remembrance, to bring him to mind, to set him before us, and to increase our love to him, by meditating upon his love, and expressing the love to him which we really feel. They are thus expressions of our real fellowship with Christ. They utter a mind which he has given to us. They increase and establish this divinely imparted mind. We love him yet the more, for telling him we love him. We value him yet the more highly, for testifying our value for him. He becomes dearer to us, and more precious to us, as we utter to him the real choice and desire of our hearts towards him. And we are made still more able to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

III.

ITS APPOINTED TOKENS.

1. THE Christian's heart desires outward, positive ordinances, as tokens and expressions of his fellowship with Christ. These very ordinances the Saviour has himself *appointed*,—and promised his presence and blessing to be with his people, in their faithful observance, to the end of the world. These rites are ordained to be the special signs and pledges of his remembrance of them, of his fellowship with them, and of his aid, support, and acceptance of them, as his servants and disciples, members of his family, and heirs of his kingdom. Our 25th article says, they are “ordained of Christ, to be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain, sure witnesses, and effectual signs, of grace, and

God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him." We go to them to express the state of our mind towards Christ. And he meets us, to express in them, and by them, the state of his mind towards us. They are utterances of our love to him; and they are utterances of his love to us. They are seals and pledges of our devotion to his service; and they are seals and pledges of his gracious acceptance of us, and of the bestowal of his salvation upon us. And when our affectionate hearts, under the teaching and guidance of his Spirit, are ready to say, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat; I would present myself a living sacrifice to him, acceptable in his sight!" Then he replies in the precious privileges of his Gospel, to which he leads us, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." "Do this in remembrance of me. Take ye, eat ye; this is my body, which is given for you. Drink

ye all of it, for this is my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." He sets before us these simple ordinances, as the tokens of our communion together. And not only his people among themselves, but also he himself with them, here have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, thus sealed and certified to them, cleanseth them from all sin. While they thus present their assurance of love to God, "God's grace and good will," according to the statement of our article, "doth work invisibly in them, not only to quicken, but to strengthen and confirm their faith in him."

2. These appointed ordinances of the Saviour for his people, are called *sacraments*. The term sacrament is not a scriptural word, in our English version. But it has been habitually employed in this connection in the church of Christ, and is now the familiar term used for this purpose. Its origin in this use, is in its employment in the early Latin version of the Scriptures, called the Vulgate, as the

translation of the Greek word for *mystery*. And in many places in the New Testament where we read *mystery*, the Vulgate has *sacramentum*, or sacrament. The term mystery, in its Greek use, meant a speech or an action, which had some secret meaning beyond the mere outward aspect. Such was a parable or an allegory in speech. Such was every action or observance, that was designed to be symbolic or emblematical of a thought or a fact concealed in it. Thus St. Paul says of the institution of marriage, Ephesians, v. 32, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church,"—meaning that marriage is an important symbol or emblem of the connection and fellowship between Christ and his church. Here the Vulgate has translated him, "This is a great sacrament." The ancient Greek liturgies used the word "*mysterion*," or mystery, in application to the appointed ordinances which we now call sacraments. And the word "mysteries," and "holy mysteries," is still employed in this sense, in the com-

munion office of our Prayer Book. The term *mystery* we may still use in this sense, also, in common language. But the corresponding term *sacrament* has, in our use, an exclusively technical and religious meaning. It is a divinely-appointed action or observance in religious worship, having a meaning and purpose which are concealed beneath the outward form of the ceremony, and are intended to be expressed and avowed by it. It is therefore a sacred emblem or token of the state of mind and feeling, which it is appointed to express and display.

3. Our *catechism* defines a sacrament: "An outward visible sign, of an inward spiritual grace given unto us." An outward *token*, which men can see, expressive of our inward state of mind, which they cannot see. "Ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." Established for the observance of his church, by the Saviour's own authority. Designed to be an instrument of blessing to his

people, as a means whereby they might receive the state of mind, of which it is the appointed expression; and a pledge from him that he would bestow this state of mind upon them. It is a form of expression of what they really feel, provided for them by the wisdom and goodness of their Lord. And as it is a sincere expression of their real feeling towards him, it becomes the means of still-increasing and establishing these feelings. They love him the more, and feel the more devotion to his service, in the very fact of uttering and testifying the love and devotion which he has already given them. But all this work upon the heart is of the Holy Ghost; and while he first leads the spirit of fellowship, which he has imparted to them, to seek the appointed ordinance as its permitted expression, he works invisibly by this very ordinance, to quicken, strengthen, and confirm the faith and love which he has bestowed. The Holy Spirit accompanies us to the ordinance; prepares the heart to engage in it; brings to the mind blessed remembrances

of the Saviour, whose love we seek ; fills the meditations with the things of Christ ; gives brighter hopes and stronger faith in him, as we think of and remember his love ; bestows a consciousness of the Saviour's presence with us ; increases our delight in his service, and our estimation of his value ; and leads us back, more than ever determined to live not unto ourselves, but to Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus employed by the divine Spirit, as an occasion of awakening and edifying anew our spiritual mind, and calling our affections and our thoughts to our gracious Lord, the sacraments become "certain and sure witnesses, and effectual signs, of grace and God's good will to us." They are sincere testimonies of our fellowship with Christ ; and they are sure testimonies, reciprocated, of Christ's fellowship with us.

4. But we must remember, that the outward sign or token in the sacrament is *not the mere material in itself* which is employed. Not the water, or the bread and wine alone. It is the whole outward ordinance in which the water

is thus used,—and the bread and wine are thus received. The outward visible sign in Baptism is “water, wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” The outward visible sign in the Lord’s supper, is “bread and wine which the Lord hath commanded to be received.” The appointed token is the whole observance, including all that is outward to the ear and eye of others. It includes the act of the ministry, and the act of the people assembled for the purpose,—the offering of prayer and praise, the reading of the word of God,—and whatever may have been appointed as of necessity requisite to the due ministering of the sacraments. This distinction is very important. There is nothing sacred or holy in the mere materials employed for a religious ministry. The sacredness and holiness appertain exclusively to their use for the purpose appointed. It is a holy ordinance, a sacred occasion. But the whole ordinance must be complied with to make the outward visible sign. The

whole action which includes and employs these outward material elements, is the token of our fellowship with Christ, and the appointed sign and witness of God's grace and good will to us. And we can never take any one part of this appointed token, and consider that we speak of that, as more holy, or more essential than another. It is the purpose and design in the use, which marks and constitutes the character of that use. Our article says, "the sacraments were not ordained by Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect and operation." They were appointed as tokens for a special use ;—and they are such tokens, only as they are so used.

5. We must remember too, that the inward spiritual grace is *not in the material elements*, or connected with them. It is "given unto us." It is in the hearts of those who rightly use them. There is no religious influence flowing from water, or from bread and wine. They are

wholly outward, and perishing,—mere dead elements. They can never be anything else. The soul cannot be reached by them, or anything in them, through the body. The Holy Spirit makes the sacrament,—that is the whole ordinance and occasion,—when rightly improved, an occasion, and an instrument of awakening in the mind, holy thoughts, holy affections, holy desires. He thus works invisibly in us, by God's grace and good will, to strengthen and confirm our faith and love to God. He does this as he does with the words of Holy Scripture, by which as we read or hear them, he awakens and excites thoughts and desires in the mind within, and thus quickens and confirms our faith and love. But the Bible which we read, the actual book, is not holy. Its paper and leather are no more than any other paper or leather. The truths which its pages teach, when the heart receives them and loves them, become a blessing, and a holy gift to us. And the Holy Spirit invisibly works within us, as we read or hear these

blessed truths, with a right mind, to make them spirit and life in our minds and hearts within. And thus our Bibles, when rightly used, are made "certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of God's grace and good will to us." Let us be careful to avoid all superstitious veneration for these mere dead elements. Let our service be a spiritual, rational, and religious service, in which, while all our use of the mere elements is a reverent and holy use, appropriate to the occasion, and expressive of a proper state of mind in us, there shall be an avoidance of all idolatrous gazing at these particles of dead matter, or superstitious preservation of them, or carrying them about, as if any holiness of character or divine influence appertained to them,—or imagining that in any way, Christ is in them, or is connected with them.

6. The inward spiritual grace we are to find *within ourselves*, and not in the materials of the ordinance. It is the state of mind and heart, which is the work of the Holy Spirit within

us. The outward ordinance with all its circumstances and component parts, is the external token which the Lord has appointed for the expression of this mind. The sacrament must consist of both, united. Not one, or either one, without the other. There are "two parts" in a sacrament. These are the two. They must go together. The absence of either must of necessity destroy the ordinance for the purpose for which it was divinely appointed. There must be real sincerity of heart, in the experience and possession of that state of thought and feeling, of which the particular ordinance is the ordained expression. And these must be the appropriate and commanded expression of it, in the ordinance appointed. Then the sacrament, thus rightly used, and spiritually observed, becomes a means of spiritual grace to us,—and a pledge to assure us thereof. And the Holy Spirit works invisibly in us, by it, to strengthen and confirm our faith. Thus Philpot, one of the wisest of the martyrs of the Reformation answered, "It

is no perfect sacrament, until it be received. For in the sacrament, there be two things to be considered, the sign, and the thing itself, which is Christ and his whole passion. And it is that to none but to such as worthily receive the holy signs of bread and wine, according to Christ's institution. If any come worthily to receive, then do I confess the presence of Christ wholly to be, with all the fruits of his passion, unto the said worthy receiver, by the Spirit of God, and that Christ is thereby joined to him, and he to Christ."

7. Thus the *usefulness and efficacy*, the advantages or benefits of these appointed tokens, to those who unite in them, depend entirely on their own state of mind and heart. Ordinances cannot give that state of heart. "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith," says our 29th article, "in no wise are partakers of Christ; but rather to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing." Sacraments are not for the unconverted and the unbelieving. They are not

acts of individual ministerial authority. They are not instruments of outward power. They are the acts of those who receive, as well as those who administer. Accordingly all the language of the offices provided for them by our church, is in the name of the people engaged, and in the plural expression of their feelings, wish, and purpose—in the service in which they are engaged. They must come with the state of mind required, or there is no token of fellowship with Christ. They are bid and urged to examine themselves to find this state of mind,—to seek and acquire this state of mind,—and are solemnly warned, that with this only, can the occasion be a benefit to them. Without this it must be condemning and destructive,—a vain and profane mockery, instead of a religious and holy commemoration. But with this mind which the Holy Spirit has given, this true penitent heart and lively faith,—this humble and hearty thanks to God, even the Father,—this affectionate remembrance of our only Saviour dying for us,—

we may happily unite in the holy mysteries which he hath instituted and ordained, to our great and endless comfort,—and we may be able to say, “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

IV.

ITS TOKEN OF DEDICATION—BAPTISM.

1. THE affectionate heart always *desires* to express the affection which it feels. Some appropriate and suitable form of such expression, either in words or acts, is received and embraced as a privilege highly valued. The heart which has been turned from sin, and brought to love Christ, is eager for some such expression of its love to him. It is conscious of having received from him great and unspeakable blessings. It is deeply grateful for such boundless mercies. It would find some way of rendering to the Lord a return, for the amazing benefits it has been permitted to enjoy,—at least a return of acknowledgment and praise. The soul, conscious of its redemption, having heard and believed the glad tidings of

pardon and salvation in the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus, longs to dedicate itself completely to him. Bought with a price, and redeemed from the condemnation of its guilt, it would come before him in a simple, solemn act of complete devotion. It would render up itself to him a living sacrifice, to be his alone, and his forever. It has been brought in its own experience from death to life, from darkness to light, and it would only and openly belong to that gracious Saviour, from whom its wondrous change has come, and by whose Spirit it has been produced. In what method shall this expression be made? Is there any token appointed in the Gospel, by which, and in which, it may thus declare and record its complete dedication to the service of a Saviour, whom it now knows and loves?

2. The Saviour, who knew what was in man, has perfectly *met* and provided for this want. Having perfected our redemption by his one sacrifice of himself upon the cross; and being openly justified and accepted by the

Father, as a sacrifice and atonement for man, in his glorious resurrection from the dead ; declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the Spirit of holiness, in this wonderful return to life ; he orders his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the good news, the glad tidings, to every creature. They were to proclaim his love, his death, his glorious power, for the forgiveness and salvation of guilty men. They were to invite guilty men to come to him, that they might find rest to their souls. They were to lift him up, to draw all men unto him. They were to call upon men to come out from sin, and the world, and the power of Satan ; to be his followers and servants, with the assurance that they should be partakers of his glory. But then he knew that those who received the word of his salvation, would desire and need, and must have, some form or token, by which they should dedicate themselves to him. When their hearts received his Gospel, and they were begotten again through his word of life, to the enjoyment of a lively hope in him,

they would ask, as the instant expression of their new state of mind, "What shall we do?" This want and desire he meets, in the command to his apostles to make disciples among all nations, by "*baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here was to be the token of dedication to his service. This was to be the outward expression of the devotion of the saved. This was to be the sign of the homage of their new and grateful hearts. Thus they were to put on Christ, as their acknowledged and beloved Saviour. Thus they were to avow their purpose to live no longer to themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. Thus they were to proclaim that their fellowship was with him; that they were not their own; that he was the captain of their salvation; and that they, believing in him, and counting all things but loss for his sake, desired to suffer with him, and to reign with him; to be partakers of Christ's sufferings, and heirs of his glory.

3. This blessed appointment was to be the

permanent token of dedication to him,—the abiding form of discipleship under his instruction. He promised to follow it with his own presence, to the end of the dispensation of his Gospel. In all nations, and in all ages, when a grateful, pardoned soul, having received the fellowship of his Spirit, desired thus to acknowledge him as a Master, he would be ready personally to receive and bless such, as his disciples. He would come to them, and would dwell with them, and they should dwell with him. He would be their Lord, and they should be his people. It was to be an universal token for them. He did not limit it to any persons, or age. His Gospel was for all; all were equally invited to embrace it; all were equally in need of its pardoning mercy. The Son of man had come to seek and to save that which was lost. Circumcision, in the former publication of his covenant with Abraham, had been secluded to the males of his chosen family. But now there was to be no distinction of male or female; all were one in Christ. The

ministration of circumcision had been appointed at eight days of age in the life of man. But now there was to be no limit of age. As in Adam all died, so in Christ were all to be made alive. The blessings of the covenant, then, were circumscribed within the family of Abraham. But now there was to be no exclusion. No sinner should be shut out from the offer of salvation. No fence should be set around the privileges of the Gospel. The commission was not, therefore, Go to men or to women; to adults or to youths; to Jews or to Gentiles; to bond or to free. But it was, Go, make disciples of all nations. I have died for all; I have loved all; I will all to be saved; I am ready to receive all; I would have all come to me; whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

4. Thus the apostles *practised* their heavenly master's precept. They went out immediately after his ascension, under the special teaching of the Holy Spirit, to preach his Gospel,—to announce the precious intelligence for sinful

men, with which they were charged. They preached to all, a glorious Saviour for all. And when men believed the blessed message, and would come and join the flock which was fed by such a shepherd, then immediately they were baptized. The whole scheme of apostolic history is laid out in the first sermon which they uttered to men, after their entrance on their work. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, a glorious Christ,—a Jesus crucified by man, exalted at the right hand of God. When the Holy Spirit carried the word to the hearts of his hearers,—and they gladly received his word,—then were they permitted to come and dedicate themselves in this blessed appointment, openly to the Lord. Was the teaching limited? Was the token of their acceptance under it confined? No! The promise was to them, and to their children. The master had not limited it. How could the disciples do it? The Saviour had expressly said to them, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is

the kingdom of Heaven." And how should they prohibit what their master suffered? Accordingly they baptized whole households, when converted parents would dedicate them to God. Nor did they ever refuse to accept the children of believers who sought for them, the appointed token of dedication. Well then does our 27th article say, "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." Certainly,—why should it not be? What single word is there in the divine command, or in the Scripture history, which is opposed to it? And if the Saviour did not shut them out from his fellowship; but expressly declared they belonged to it; and selected them as the very type of it; why may they not have the token of this blessed privilege, and say "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

5. The church of Christ has thus *maintained* this blessed appointment of the Lord, through

succeeding ages. Our church perpetuates the ordinance as the Lord established it, and gives us a beautiful and a scriptural exhibition of its meaning and character, both in the Articles, and Catechism, and Baptismal offices in the Prayer Book. In all these various illustrations of this important subject, the simple, beautiful idea of a token of grateful dedication to the Saviour, made by a newborn and redeemed soul, is the one prominent thought presented. The 27th article says, "Baptism is a SIGN. Not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened." It is not merely a sign to separate men from one another. It has a far higher meaning and importance than that. "It is a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby," or by which regeneration or new birth, not by the outward sign of baptism, "as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly, are grafted into the church." Regeneration, or new birth, is the only instrument whereby the Holy Spirit

grafts guilty and unconverted men into the the Saviour's Church. In regeneration or new birth, the Holy Spirit gives them, fellowship with Christ—and having this heavenly gift, baptism is appointed for them as its sign. It is the token of their new and happy state, and the expression and avowal of the mind which has been thus bestowed. Thus it is our permitted token or pledge to Christ. And then it is Christ's appointed token and pledge to us. So that our article says, "the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the Sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed." We have thus made an open covenant together with Christ. We have given ourselves to him. And he has given himself to us. And then as a blessed result coming from this dedication and covenant, "faith is confirmed, and grace is increased, by virtue of prayer unto God." The Holy Spirit who has led us to this solemn affectionate devotion of ourselves to the Lord, blesses the act in answer to the prayers of his people, with in-

crease of grace, and a confirmation of our faith. We go on, more than ever determined to follow Jesus; and led by love for him, our lives under the guidance of his Spirit, become truly devoted to his glory. This is the solemn affirmation of doctrine upon this subject which our church makes. Nothing could be more conformed to the teaching of the Holy Scripture,—or expressed in terms more proper and distinct.

6. Are we asked then, what is Baptism? Our church answers, It is a *sign* of that regeneration or new birth, by which alone we can be grafted into the church of Christ. Our Catechism takes up the same clear and blessed instruction. It teaches us that Baptism consists of two parts;—Its “outward visible sign, is water, wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Its “inward spiritual grace given unto us, is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are

hereby," that is, by this death unto sin, and this new birth unto righteousness, not by the outward sign of Baptism, "made the children of grace." There is no other way to make those who are by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, the children of grace, but by this new birth. And when men have received this gracious blessing from the Spirit of God, who has begotten them again by the word of truth, then they are invited to come, and in the Saviour's appointed token, dedicate themselves to Christ, and enter into covenant with him. Then they bring with them, that which the Catechism says is required of those who come to be baptized, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God to them in that sacrament." Thus the truly baptized,—or "they who receive baptism rightly," are signed and sealed, as the real disciples of Christ, according to his command. They have yielded themselves his servants, and he has accepted them, and become their master. They can

say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Baptism is the sign of this. It is their sign, and it is Christ's sign. And the Catechism rightly says of such Baptism, "*wherein* I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." The Catechism does not say *whereby*; this would not be true. We are not made so by Baptism, but by the Holy Ghost,—as we have already seen in the affirmation of our article; "our adoption to be the Sons of God by the Holy Ghost." We could never truly say, we were made thus by Baptism. For we are required to bring the evidences of this adoption when we come to baptism—and must have already received it. But we are made so *in* Baptism, for thus is the act of our dedication and covenant completed and declared, and the Saviour's acceptance of us sealed and proclaimed.

7. We hear the question often suggested, what are the *effects* of Baptism? If this question means, what are the benefits of this

whole dedication to God, of which baptism, is the token, then we may say, all the blessings of the Gospel belong to such. They are the household of God, and partakers of Christ, if they hold the beginning of their confidence, steadfast unto the end. If it mean, what are the immediate benefits of this token itself, rightly given and received, then our article says, "they who receive baptism rightly, are by regeneration, or a new birth, grafted into the church : the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of their adoption to be the Sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God." The blessedness of such a mutual token of covenant with Christ is very great. And happy is the soul that truly makes it. If the question mean, what are the effects of the outward visible sign in itself, and in its separate ministration, we answer, no effects. It is not intended to produce any spiritual effects. It is not consistent with its nature or appointment to do so. Why

should we ask for any effects from it? Or think of effects connected with it? It is itself an effect—an expression of a previous state of mind, which has led to it. A ring is given in marriage, as a token of affection and fidelity on the part of the man who presents it. What are the effects of the ring? We know not. Many collateral effects may arise out of it. But it is not given as an instrument to produce effects. It is a sign or token of an inward state of mind, of which itself is an effect. If it be a true sign, then is there faithful love in the heart of him who gives, and of her who receives it. The outward sign is accompanied by the inward grace, and the object and purpose of the ring are secured. No direct effects flowing from the token itself are asked for or thought of. We see over a door in our streets, a golden mortar. It is a sign of the shop of a druggist. If there be a druggist's shop there, it is a true sign, and we go in for the medicine we seek in such a place. If we see the figure of a golden sheaf of wheat,—it is a baker's

sign. We expect to find bread within. If there be bread there, it is a true sign. In each case, the thing signified is found within. But what is the effect of the sign? It has no effect on the house within, towards the production of the thing of which it is a sign. It is not designed for this. Its effect is upon others, to lead them to look with hope and confidence within, for the things which are thus signified without. Baptism is a sign. Upon the person who receives and gives it as a token, it has no spiritual effect. It is not designed to have any. It is a vain and superstitious fancy to imagine or to look for any such effects to come from it. Its effect is as a sign, upon others, to persuade them to look for, and expect in the character and heart within, the things which have been thus signified without. If it be really the token and effect of regeneration or a new birth, it is a true sign. If it be not, it is a false sign; and they who have given it, when "void of a lively faith, in nowise are they partakers of Christ; but rather to their

condemnation, do give and receive the sign or sacrament of so great a thing." But how low and selfish is this mind, which asks for effects from an allowed and appointed token of love, instead of rejoicing in the privilege of being permitted to present it. How like is it to the wicked question, "Who is the Almighty that we should serve him?" And what profit shall we have if we pray to him? We do not go to Baptism for the profit. We are not invited there with this view. We go to offer ourselves,—to express our love,—to acknowledge our gratitude,—and to render our living sacrifice to God; and whatever blessings he may bestow upon us, we do not consider them as the effects of this outward observance in any way. They are his gracious gifts. Our motive is not even to seek them in this act. We serve him not in the bondage of the letter which killeth; but in the freedom of the Spirit which giveth life. We rejoice to be permitted to dedicate ourselves to him who hath redeemed us with his death; and feel that it is an inestimable mercy

which has established such a token, and allows us thus to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

8. With such views, and upon such a scheme, are the *offices* for baptism in our Prayer Book planned. These two offices, the one for adults, and the other for infants, do not materially differ. They commence with an exhortation, reminding the congregation that the necessity of man's relation to a Saviour, arises from his own guilt; from the bondage and condemnation of which, he can be delivered only by coming to Christ the Saviour; to whom he cannot truly come, but in a regeneration or new birth,—the work of the Holy Ghost upon him. The two exhortations differ only, in that the office for infants refers solely to original and inherited guilt, and the office for adults includes, also, the actual transgressions of a voluntary life of sin. In each case the thought is fundamental and prominent, that the ordinance is to be the outward token of this real inward regeneration of

the Spirit. United prayer is offered then to God, in both cases the same, that he will graciously receive and bless the persons thus presented to him, that they may be truly washed and sanctified with his Holy Spirit, and enjoy the everlasting blessing of this heavenly washing in his eternal kingdom. The church around feel the deepest interest in this dedication of new souls to Christ, and therefore earnestly pray, that the sign appointed may be a true sign, and that there may be a real gift of the inward spiritual grace, of which the external rite is the appointed token. There is then a reading in each case, of a selected portion of the Word of God, adapted severally to proclaim the authority of this outward dedication, which faith in Christ, and love for Christ, makes, either of one's own soul to his gracious service, or of one's household and children to the Lord of all. Thus far, an explanation of the ordinance has been given; the voice of man has been heard in prayer to God; the voice of God has been

heard in responsive instruction to the petition of man. Then an appropriate exhortation urges those who have thus prayed, to have faith in God's Word, and not to doubt his fidelity or truth; and begs them earnestly to believe that his gracious promises, generally spoken, will also be personally and particularly fulfilled in the present case; that the Word of God will be accomplished, and the prayers of his people answered, in the acceptance and everlasting salvation of those who are now presented to him according to his command. All this is the solemn introduction to the actual avowal of devotion to Christ, and the actual assumption of a covenant with Christ, of which the whole ordinance is the appointed token and sign. And when the act has been thus introduced, with clear instruction, with earnest prayer, with inspired promises, with a simple faith in God urged upon all who are engaged, then follows the language of the covenant itself. There is a demanded and consented renunciation of the

power and dominion of sin ; a solemn assurance of faith in the Gospel now professed ; a declared desire to assume the obligations of this faith ; and an agreement to live henceforth to God, and to walk in the path of his commandments to the end of life. This is the token and pledge on one side,—man's token and pledge to Christ. And then it is followed, according to the Lord's command, by the token and pledge on the other side,—Christ's token and pledge to man. The person thus solemnly dedicated, is baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; received into the congregation of Christ's flock ; and pledged and engaged as a faithful soldier and servant of Christ, unto his life's end. This use of water is declared to be an emblem and sign, of the regeneration which it is believed, the Holy Spirit has wrought in the heart of the person baptized. The expression is twice used in this office : " Sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin." The term *mystical* means emblematical, or

figurative. The real washing away of sin, is the removal of its condemnation by the Saviour's death, and the deliverance from its inward power by the Holy Spirit. The use of water in baptism, is appointed for a sign or token of this. It has been sanctified and set apart by the will of God, as the appropriate expression or figure of this important, real, spiritual cleansing. And we therefore speak of its use in this sacrament, as the "mystical washing away," and not the real washing away, of sin. In the same manner, in the collect for All-Saints day, and in the closing prayer in the communion office, the "whole company of God's elect," and "the blessed company of all faithful people," are declared to be "the mystical body" of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not his real, actual body, but his figurative, emblematical body. Because he dwells among his people, and animates and guides them, and is their real life, just as the soul of man dwells in the human body, and gives life to it. They are all his figurative body, in their combina-

tion and union together,—and they are, individually, members of this body, in their different personal positions. In the same way, we speak of water in Baptism, as the sign or figure of the blood and spirit of Christ, and of its sacramental use for this purpose, as the mystical, or typical and figurative, washing away of that sin which has, we believe, been really cleansed by blood of the Saviour, and the power of his Spirit. When all this is done, what then? Why, there is the appointed token, the outward visible sign, which man can see, and does see; and there is every possible testimony which can be given in the case, that there is also the inward spiritual grace, which man cannot see. Upon this foundation the church then declares, that these persons are regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church. They bless God for his gracious bestowal of such blessings upon them. They implore the continuance of his grace and mercy for them, that they may glorify him in their lives, and be made inheritors of his everlasting kingdom.

They exhort them to be faithful in their covenanted obedience and love, and never to forget that this whole expressive ordinance represents to them the sacred profession which they have assumed, to die from sin, and to live for Christ. They are urged to walk as the children of God, and of the light, and to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

9. Thus perfectly *scriptural* and appropriate is the language of the Prayer Book, upon this subject. We may well suppose that the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, gave thanks to God, in language exceedingly similar, for the blessed work of regeneration which they had seen declared by many souls that day. What else could we say with equal propriety? How could we change such appropriate language with advantage? To say that it is not in all cases absolutely, individually true, does not affect its propriety. It ought to be true. And language must be selected to express that which ought to be true, and not adapted to

the possible falsehood of individual cases. The language of all our public prayers is false, in the particular case of many who use them. The humble and penitent expressions of our daily general confession, are certainly false on the tongues of many who repeat them. But they ought to be true. And our language of public worship must express that which ought to be true, to which the minds and hearts of men ought to be conformed, and not lower the divine demands to meet the guilty failures of men. The objection to the language of our office for baptism, would lie just as much against the whole language of our liturgy,—nay, just as much, too, against any other shape or form of public prayer which could be proposed. We could never utter any single general expression, in the name of an assembled congregation, which would not be found false in its application to some particular persons in that congregation. This is a case for which we can never provide, and never ought to provide. The only question is, what ought to be the

truth in each case? For this, the appointed expression must be provided. For nothing else than this. Any other system of expression would be conniving at man's hypocrisy, and sacrificing the truth of God, to the rebellion of man. This the church of God can never do. Baptism is the appointed sign of regeneration. As such the church must always consider it, employ it, pray and give thanks concerning it. If in any case, or in many cases, it proves to be not a true sign, the church who have solemnly sought and testified the truth, have not connived at the falsehood. The guilt of the deception must be upon the persons who have employed it. But we can never plan for such guilt, or encourage it by its anticipation. It is as unreasonable and unjust to charge the church with the responsibility of this alleged hypocrisy of individuals, as it would be to hold the community of a city responsible, because in certain houses, where the mortar or the sheaf was still over the door, neither medicine nor bread could be found

within; or to condemn the shape and form of the whole customary issue of bank-notes in the money of commerce, because in some cases, or in many cases, there had been found notes which were wholly counterfeit, or issued by banks unsound. We must still take the language of profession as the language of truth, or there will be a total end to man's dealing with his fellow-men. Thus the apostles did. They could not search the hearts of men.. They found themselves often deceived. And yet they still acted upon the same principle of announcing general truth, in particular application, even though in individual cases it might be a false avowal. St. Paul says to the Galatians, "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ:"—though he is obliged to say in reference to some of the very same Galatians,—“who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Thus our church has planned the language of her public offices upon this, and upon all other subjects. If individual persons have not conformed to it in fact, the language stands a testimony and a condemnation against them. They are in nowise partakers of Christ. If in faith and with a true heart, they really come to the public language of the liturgy, in its worship of prayer and praise, the blessing is theirs, and a great blessing. If in this token of dedication, this sacrament of their covenant with Christ, this avowal of their fellowship with him, they truly express the state of mind which it displays, and have actually the adoption of Sons of God by the Holy Ghost, which it declares,—then may they say with more assured and happy confidence than before, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

V.

ITS TOKEN OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT—CONFIRMATION.

1. Baptism is our token of dedication to Christ our Redeemer and Lord. While this is the purpose of the ordinance, as an observance divinely appointed for the church, it has also important uses of *instruction* in its ministration. It aptly teaches and signifies man's original sinfulness, and his need of spiritual regeneration,—his actual guilt, and the fulness of divine forgiveness, provided for him in the blood of Jesus. It displays the real cleansing of the soul, in the Saviour's death, and by the power of his Spirit. It calls to mind all the blessings,—the everlasting blessings, which complete redemption brings to the guilty, through the grace of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The prophets, in

similar figures of speech, describe the same blessed gifts, which baptism, in its peculiar symbol, displays. "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall do them." The sacrament of baptism represents and displays all these amazing blessings, and bids us seek them. It reminds us of the vast privileges of our redemption, and bids us improve them, and take advantage of them. It proclaims to us the free grace of God, as it is richly and abundantly offered us in Christ, pardoning, renewing, and sanctifying us, according to his mercy,

that we may be heirs of his kingdom. It reminds us of our obligations to entire and perfect obedience to Christ, to whom it is the pledge of our dedication. It urges us to a faithful and continual confession of Christ, as our Master and Lord, in the midst of the world in which we dwell, and to a persevering obedience to him, founded upon our experience of his love, our esteem for his value to us, and our gratitude for his goodness. It thus teaches and preaches Jesus Christ, in all his fulness and excellence, to the eyes and minds of believing men. And it is most valuable for these purposes of spiritual instruction to the church of God.

2. With these important uses of baptism, the ordinance has always been very *dear* to the Christian church. When the Gospel was first proclaimed to a family or a nation, where before there had been no knowledge of Christ, they who gladly received the word, would be the first baptized. Thus adults would of necessity first come, to offer themselves unto the

Lord. This was not that adults had peculiar rights under the commission given to the apostles, but from the natural operation of the circumstances in the case. There was nothing in the command which appointed the ordinance,—nothing in the purpose for which it was appointed,—nothing in the scheme, or principles, or promises of the Gospel to which it belonged,—nothing in the previous dispensations of the divine revelation to men,—nothing in the Saviour's own practice as the exponent of his precept,—either to give adults peculiar privileges in the ordinance, or to shut out infants from a participation in it. We might on the contrary say, there was much in all these suggested points, to manifest the rights of children to the dedication which it expressed, and the privilege of believing parents to bring their children with them into this blessed incorporation in the household of faith. Accordingly, from the beginning, the historical fact was, in the Scriptures, and in ages succeeding the Scriptures, that Christian families were baptized.

and believers and their households were dedicated to the Lord. And children were educated as holy, as the disciples of the Saviour, brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The sacred ordinance was in no aspect more dear to the church, than as the appointed family token of dedication to Christ; saying in the most expressive and beautiful way, in the patriarchs profession, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And the piety, wisdom, and love of Christian parents, was illustrated in taking this first step of solemn renunciation for their children, in their name, of the powers of evil, and of solemn devotion of them to the Saviour, who had invited them to himself; giving a just and appropriate expression for themselves, in this tender and affecting ordinance, of a state of mind like Hannah's:—"For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me the petition which I asked of him, therefore also I have lent him to the Lord: as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord." And no

record is there, of the refusal by any apostle to receive such a dedication, or of their correction of the desire as a misconception of a Christian's privileges and rights.

3. The *right* of infants to baptism, our church has maintained, with an affectionate and scriptural decision. They are redeemed by the Saviour's blood, who has made a propitiation for their sins. The curse and condemnation of their inherited guilt is taken from them, by his gracious endurance of it in their stead. They are partakers of his grace and pardoning mercy through his gift. If he call them in infancy from earth, they are sure partakers of his everlasting glory. They are thus the very type of character and condition to which adult and voluntary transgressors are to be brought back, if they would be partakers of the kingdom of heaven. And when the Holy Spirit has renewed the soul of the adult, and in faith this renewed soul has embraced the Saviour's righteousness for its whole acceptance, its condition is, that through the Saviour's grace the

burden of guilt is pardoned, and the habit of disobedience removed. The man becomes a little child again, and thus dedicates himself, as a little child, to him who hath bought him with a price. The Saviour, therefore, commanded his apostles to baptize little children, in the very same words in which he commanded them to baptize adults. And thus our church has ever maintained the parent's privilege and the infant's right. Following the Saviour's example and command, in the language of the office for the baptism of infants, the church commands them to be brought to Christ; blames those who would keep them from him; exhorts all men to follow their innocency; declares the Saviour's good-will towards them; urges all to believe that he will favorably receive them, that he will embrace them in the arms of his mercy, and make them partakers of everlasting life; and avows the absence of all doubt that he favorably allows this work of love, in bringing them to his holy baptism. Nothing could be more scriptural or

appropriate than teaching and acting like this. And we may well rejoice with thanksgiving over every new dedication of a redeemed child to the Saviour's service, and the Saviour's glory.

4. Children thus dedicated to God enter into an express personal *covenant* to be the Lord's. The same promises which an adult makes for himself, others make in their name. They thus become their sureties and sponsors, acting for them in this devotion of them to the Lord. All the requisite qualifications for baptism they actually have. Repentance, whereby adults forsake sin, can never be more, or better, than the complete absence of sin to be repented of, which is theirs. Faith, whereby adults may steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in this sacrament, the infant cannot now have for himself, but they who bring him can. And the blessing of their faith may be as really his, as the blessing upon the paralytic, whom the faith of affectionate friends brought to Christ. "And when Jesus saw

their faith, he said to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee." It is a divine appointment, that most of our blessings come to us through the agency of others. And this covenant or engagement for a child is surely one of the highest blessings which can be conferred upon him. The privileges which it brings are all his, and the responsibilities which it imposes are his also. And if we may assume very questionable responsibilities for our children, in their earthly relations, and for earthly benefits, as we often do, then surely there can be no reason why we may not lay upon them perfectly unquestionable obligations, involving everlasting blessings on their souls, their absolute and undoubted duty. When such a covenant is thus made, and the solemn dedication of a child has been sealed with avowed faith in God, and prayer to God, and by the appointed ordinance of God, the congregation may with entire sincerity give thanks to God for such inestimable benefits, and rejoice that another soul has been received, as regenerated

by the Holy Spirit, made the child of God by adoption, and incorporated into his holy church. The possible future infidelity of the child to this covenant, can no more be taken into the account to destroy the reality of such thankfulness and joy, than in similar circumstances the possible future unfaithfulness of the adult. The hypocrisy of pretended faith and love for Christ, no more justly forms an element in the one case than in the other. Alas! if man waited till he could form absolutely infallible judgments of the character of his fellow-men, before he received them, and refused to acknowledge any to be right until he certainly knew that they were right, and would be forever right, there must be an end of all fellowship one with another. The Lord might know them that were his. But there could be no church or communion of saints assembled, till he should bring all the hidden things of darkness to light. This is not the ground assumed by our church. We stand all of us before the Lord, with our wives and our little

ones, to enter into covenant with the Lord of hosts. We sign and seal this blessed covenant, for us and for them. And we praise God for the privilege of making it, and for the blessings and the hopes of it, when it is made.

5. On the *foundation* of this covenant, we start our children in their course of life. The responsibility is theirs. We teach them that their heavenly Father hath called them to a state of salvation: that they are no longer their own; they belong to Jesus Christ their Saviour; that they must pray for grace to be in reality, what their profession requires, and to continue in their Saviour's service, unto their lives' end. They have engaged to be the children of God, and the children of the light, faithful soldiers and servants of Christ. Their baptism is a sign upon them, of that which ought to be within. It is a false sign, if there be no regeneration of the spirit, no conversion of the heart to God within them. It is a false sign, if there be no love for Christ,—no earnest and constant effort to obey the divine command

ments. They are lent unto the Lord, and they must be the Lord's. The promises which have been made for them, they are bound to fulfil and perform. And notwithstanding the outward sign has been assumed, never, until they do faithfully endeavor to fulfil these promises, can they say "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." When we see in them the blessed fruits of the Spirit, the evidences of a new birth,—the real marks of their adoption as the children of God, by the Holy Ghost,—the operation of the new heart, and the right spirit, of which their baptism is the sign,—the proof of their real fellowship with Christ,—then may we rejoice in the testimony that their dedication to God is real and complete. Their baptism has been rightly received, and they are truly made partakers of Christ by his Holy Spirit. Now the outward sign assumed by them, and the inward grace given unto them—accord, and are united together. Their covenant with the Saviour is real. They are his children, and he is their

Lord. He dwelleth in them, and they dwell in him. And the church has appointed for them, another expressive and important observance, another public religious rite, which is to be their *token of acknowledgment*, of the fellowship in which they are engaged, and of the covenant which they have assumed ; their peculiar personal profession of their faith in the Saviour, and their love for his commandments.

6. This token of acknowledgment is *confirmation*. We do not call this rite a sacrament, in the technical use to which we confine that term. It has "no visible sign or ceremony, ordained of God." It was not appointed by Christ himself for the observance of his church. It is an apostolic rite, instituted and practised by the apostles, and from their example maintained and perpetuated in the Christian church. It is a token of our fellowship with Christ, which has the same meaning and purpose as the ordinance of baptism, so far as it is the expression of our own minds. And it is appointed and observed by our church, as a method of completing and

proclaiming before the congregation, our own voluntary assumption of the covenant of baptism upon ourselves. It is thus a public completion of our Infant Baptism. Accordingly, those who come to be partakers of this rite, publicly declare that they renew the solemn promise and vow which they made at their baptism. They assume all the sacred obligations which that vow and promise imposed. They ratify and confirm the agreement into which they then entered. They acknowledge themselves bound to believe and to do, all those things which they then undertook. If they were now setting out afresh in a choice for life, they would make no other choice but that. They are now setting out afresh, so far as regards their own responsibility, and action, and personal account, and they do make this choice deliberately for themselves. This is peculiarly their personal profession of religion before the church,—and their public voluntary union with the communion of the church. None ought to make such a profession but they who

are truly the servants and disciples of the Saviour in their hearts,—who feel the value of his love to them,—who really love him in return, and mean to devote themselves completely to his service and glory. It is their acknowledgment of their own sinfulness and unworthiness before God,—of their sincere conviction of their guilt in his sight,—of their true sorrow for their sin,—of their repentance in an earnest forsaking of voluntary transgression,—of their affectionate and grateful acceptance of the Saviour's love,—of their entire consecration of themselves to him,—of their humble and complete dependence upon his merits and death for their salvation,—of their simple trust in his Holy Spirit to lead them in his ways in obedience to his commands, and in a likeness to his example. It is a solemn, faithful renunciation of the world, and sin, and self, for Christ, who is to be now their chosen portion, and their everlasting treasure. All this, they acknowledge and profess; its obligation, its privilege, the divine gift of it to

them,—their own enjoyment and possession of this gift,—their purpose to maintain and cultivate it as the great object of their life. This constitutes an inward fellowship with Christ, which they have received from his Holy Spirit. And this appointed rite is the token of their acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus, as the Saviour in whom they trust, and the master whom they choose to obey. The real making of this choice, indicates that which our church calls “being come to years of discretion;” and in the catechism, “come to a competent age.” The age of man in this relation, is not to be determined by the number of years which his body may have actually passed since its birth, but by the state and condition of his soul. “Honorable age standeth not in the length of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto man.” He that has not been born again of the Holy Spirit, has not really begun to live for the great purpose for which his being was conferred. In the church of God, the question, “How old art thou?” has a

meaning peculiar to the place and connection, —a man may be fourscore years old, and yet have but just become “a babe in Christ.” He may have lived many years of earthly gain and earthly greatness, and yet never have come to years of discretion, in the great business of his soul. He may have spent his time for nought, and his labor for that which profiteth him nothing. This we cannot call, in any sense, discretion. When we have been brought to feel our spiritual need and obligations, to acknowledge the Saviour’s importance and worth to us, to be glad to assume his sacred covenant upon us, and to count all earthly things but loss for his sake, really to accept his invitations in our hearts, and to give up ourselves freely and finally to his service, then have we arrived at years of discretion and a competent age, in the view of the church, whether we are old or young, and never till then. And then, under the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, are we first ready to assume this appointed token of acknowl-

edgment, that we belong, and mean to belong, to Christ. Then do we truly enter upon our heavenly journey, and begin our real, abiding, spiritual life. And at this point of their real life, may they who have been dedicated to God in holy baptism, intelligently and honestly present themselves to confirm the covenant with God, which was then made for them.

7. Then this rite is a token of acknowledgment *of them*, by the Saviour and his church. They thus openly confess him before men, as their Lord, and he will openly confess them as his children and friends. He will confess them now, in the midst of the church. If they are faithful unto death, he will confess them forever before his Father and the holy angels. The church publicly acknowledge them as the servants of Christ, and members of his body. The pastor who has been employed to teach them the way of truth, presents them to the chief minister of the church, before whom, as the representative of the whole body, they make their affectionate and solemn acknowl-

edgment. The bishop, the appointed overseer of the flock of Christ, acknowledges them, as truly received into this flock, lays his hands upon their heads in solemn prayer for each, implores for them the renewed gifts of heavenly grace, and a faithful continuance in the blessed service in which they are now engaged; entreats from God their constant growth in every virtue and every grace, until their earthly warfare shall be completed, and they are made possessors of the heavenly kingdom. They are now the acknowledged servants and soldiers of Christ, engaged in actual contest, and sent out for glorious victory. After the example of the apostles, the bishop and pastor of the church has laid his hands on them, to certify them, by this sign, of God's favor and gracious goodness towards them, and of their public adoption and acceptance by the church, as members of its communion, to live no longer to themselves, but for him who died for them, and rose again. They are in all the earthly bonds of profession, communicants for

the table of the Lord. Their names are written as such, in the books of the earthly church. They are to show in all the fruits of holiness, in the work of faith, and patience of hope, and labor of love, their election of God, and that they have a record on high, and their names written in the Lamb's book of life. If this be their character and real state, they may look upon this mutual token of acknowledgment between themselves and their glorious Lord, and his militant elected church, and say with increasing delight and thankfulness, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." They may look forward with constantly increasing joy, to the glorious day, when the Lord will acknowledge them in everlasting triumph in the kingdom of his glory; and be encouraged to press forward in their appointed course, till they receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.*

* See upon the subject of this chapter, the author's *GUIDE TO CONFIRMATION*, in which this rite is particularly treated.

VI.

ITS TOKEN OF DEPENDENCE.—THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. THE Christian's dependence for spiritual life is *entirely* upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the blessed truth which fills the Bible, and makes the real value of its revelations to us. There is salvation in no other. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved. Without him we are nothing. This is the blessed truth which fills our Prayer Book also. Life only in Christ for guilty men, is the testimony which is found in all our offices of worship, all our ordinances, all our prayers, and all our praise,—

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee.”

This is the simple doctrine of our church, to

which utterance is given always and in a great variety of forms. This is the blessed truth which enlightens and comforts the Christian's heart. The Holy Spirit teaches him, in a deep experience of his own need and guilt, to see that by works of his own he can never be justified. He feels that he cannot stand before God in any righteousness of his own obedience. There has not been a single hour, or a single act of his life, which he could select as in itself acceptable to God. There has not been a single hour, or a single act, which he does not earnestly and thoroughly renounce before God as any foundation of hope for his soul. He knows that he is lost, and he feels himself to be lost, under the burden and condemnation of his own sin. And by works of righteousness which he has done he can never be saved. The Holy Spirit teaches him this blessed truth, by revealing to his soul the gracious provisions and promises of the Gospel; proclaiming in Christ an all-sufficient Saviour; offering in Christ a personal and adapted Sav-

iour to him ; enabling him to receive Christ as a complete righteousness and salvation for himself ; giving him a simple trust in Christ, as having already become his salvation ; and teaching him to go constantly to Christ, in faith and hope, for the supply of all his own needs, from the unsearchable riches of a Saviour's grace. The Holy Spirit teaches him this blessed truth by giving him peace of conscience in a simple trust in Christ for pardon and acceptance ; inspiring him with a lively hope in the glorious triumphs of Christ, as triumphs for him ; filling him with joy and confidence, as he rests upon the unchanging fidelity of Christ to the word of his promise ; strengthening him in contest and duty, as he leans upon the assured presence of Christ in his hour of trial ; making him interested and engaged in labors for Christ, in gratitude for the riches of his redeeming love ; teaching him to be happy in all losses and sufferings for Christ, as he tries to follow in his steps ; and elevating his soul with delight, as he looks forward to being with

Christ in the kingdom of his glory. His soul lives on this blessed truth, *none but Christ*. And the more simply he perceives and enjoys it, the more consciously and happily is his soul alive to God. For him to live is Christ. There is no view of being which he can call life, from which Christ is excluded. Whatever are his plans, or prospects, or efforts, or hopes, or joys, Christ is all, and in all. This is life in Christ. Entire dependence on Christ for the life of the soul.

2. This dependence on Christ in the Christian's heart *desires* a peculiar *token* of expression. It needs such a token, as the special utterance and avowal of itself. The Christian longs to speak the love he feels, and to have some particular shape and form in which he may utter it, which shall be especially appropriate to itself. This spirit of dependence utters itself in all the fruits and acts of a Christian life. Every trait of holiness in the character,—every act of obedience to the Saviour's commands,—every attempt to do his sacred

will,—every effort to imitate his example in usefulness to men, in beneficence to the needy, in instruction to the ignorant,—every resistance of unholy temptation, or correction of unholy tempers, or denial of sinful suggestions or appetite,—is an utterance and avowal of this spiritual life in Christ. As a branch of him who is the true vine, all these appropriate fruits and results are evidences of this living connection and communion of the renewed soul with Jesus. It may justly be said of all these peculiar tokens of the Christian's spirit and character, he lives, yet not he, but Christ liveth in him. The life of Christ is thus made manifest in his mortal flesh. And the Christian has sincere delight in doing all these things for Christ's sake. He rejoices in counting all but loss for Christ. He feels that he can only do all as Christ is pleased to strengthen him. But apart from these constant living evidences, these daily, hourly tokens of his love for his chosen and accepted Lord, the Christian's heart still longs for some positive,

peculiar, and absolute expression of the state of his mind and heart towards the Saviour whom he so consciously and really loves. Had the Lord appointed no such holy sign, no appropriate sacrament of the Christian's faith and love, it is more than likely Christians would have established some one, perhaps many observances, as commemorations and remembrances of this fellowship, which they truly have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. It is a system of expression, a method of utterance, most adapted to the nature of man, which the heart of man always seeks, and of which the world and the experience of man are full. And beyond the one token of dedication which the Lord appointed, and the one token of acknowledgment which his apostles observed beside, and which proclaim the Christian's choice and stand, but upon a single occasion in life, there remains the need of a constant testimony of the dependence of that spiritual mind which is renewed day by day.

3. The Lord has graciously *appointed* just the

sign which the hearts of his people would desire. One precisely and beautifully adapted to the want for which it has been ordained. It is so expressive, that none can reasonably be mistaken in its character, or misunderstand its purpose ; so simple, that every class of his disciples may engage in it with intelligence and convenience ; so easy of observance that it may be maintained in every age and in every land ; so little costly in earthly provision, that the poorest and most scattered of his people need never be shut out from its perpetuation among men ;—so manifestly depending for all its meaning and worth upon the state of mind which it is to express, that no one could be less likely to be abused by human superstition, or corrupted by the vicious nature of man. How simple is the history of its institution and appointment ! “ The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, as they were eating, took bread ; and when he had blessed it, and given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take ye ; Eat ye ; this is my body which

is given and broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. And after the same manner, he also took the cup, after supper, and gave thanks, and gave it to them; saying, Drink ye all of it; and they all drank of it; and he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, and this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father, in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." This is an account of the *institution* of this token of a Saviour's love, combining all the separate circumstances which are given in the several different histories in the New Testament. It occurred in the evening before the Saviour's death. His disciples had prepared a room according to his command, where they might eat

their last passover together. It was the last meeting with his disciples before he suffered; and he had earnestly desired to unite with them this once more in this sacred commemoration of the Lord's former mercy to their nation. This passover, the annual token of the redemption of Israel, was now to be completed, and abolished, in his own real redemption of guilty men by his death for them upon the cross. He was the true Paschal Lamb, of whom not a bone was to be broken. Christ was the real Passover, who was to be slain for his people, that they might hereafter keep the feast which he would institute, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. And when he was seated with his few disciples, at the table which had been thus prepared, he appointed for them this token by which they and those who should come after them, should commemorate his love, and show forth their remembrance of his death for them, until his coming again. He took the *bread* which was on the table. It would remind them, that he was himself the true bread,

the bread of life, the bread of God;—as their bodies fed upon that outward bread, so their souls must really feed upon him; as this visible bread nourished and preserved their bodies in being, so should their spiritual feeding upon him, nourish and preserve their souls within. The bread upon which their souls must really live, was his own flesh given for them in death;—the actual foundation of hope and support for their souls in everlasting life, was in the voluntary sacrifice of his body, as an atonement and ransom for them. Upon this atonement and ransom by his death, they might live,—they must live,—they had no other means of life. But this was abundant means of life, life abundantly. This provided complete forgiveness—absolute, everlasting salvation. It might remind them too, that as that bread was one loaf, though composed of many particles, so they were really one spiritual body in him. The corns of wheat of which it was composed, were the fruit of other corns of wheat which had fallen into the ground and

died. Thus was he to die for them,—and they, and all whom the Father had given him, who should come after them, should be one bread and one body. All in their turn should individually die, but the body of his followers should still remain. Generation after generation should succeed, and he would be with them all, and be the life and the food of all, to the end of the world. He thus took the bread, and brake it,—and gave to each of them a part, and said, “Take ye, and eat ye,—this is my body, given and broken for you.” They had no misunderstanding of this form of expression. They could have none. The very feast at which they were assembled, they called the Passover, simply because it represented and commemorated the Passover far distant, and long past. They therefore well understood, when their Lord said of the bread which he held in his hand, “this is my body,”—he meant it, in the same way, a token and sign of his body, to them, when the time of his death should be long past, and the place of it far distant. Then

they were still to do this same thing in remembrance of him,—his disciples were to break the bread among themselves, and as they united in feeding upon it, to remember that they were all united in living upon him who had died for them, and were one bread and one body in him. In the same manner, he took the cup of wine which was on the table, and gave thanks, and gave it to them all to drink. It was to be to them the sign and symbol of his blood, which he freely shed for their forgiveness and salvation. That blood established a new covenant with God for sinners—sealed a New Testament of everlasting blessings to his people; provided complete remission of sins for all who would embrace his Gospel; gave hope, and comfort, and peace, to all who believed in him; was the blessed assurance of entire redemption and everlasting life, to every one who should experience its cleansing and healing power. Thus they perfectly understood it; and received the wine which the cup contained, as the established token and me-

morial, of the precious blood of divine reconciliation, which their gracious Lord should shed for them. The purpose of the observance was perfectly plain. It marked and expressed the entire dependence of the disciples upon their Lord: the life of the church of God in the glorious Redeemer, the appointed head and Saviour of the whole body. With deep and affectionate gratitude, they received the appointed token, of the dependence they sincerely felt. With tender thankfulness, they sung their hymn of praise. And with still more established affection, they remembered his kindness past, and anticipated his future glorious return, to make them partakers of his everlasting kingdom.

4. This blessed token of spiritual dependence which had been thus instituted, the apostles afterwards habitually *observed*. They observed it in the most simple manner. They connected it with their frequent assembling for religious worship, as one of the most important parts of that worship, and of their remembrance

of their beloved Lord and Master. They called it habitually the "breaking of bread," because this was the peculiar sign which distinguished it as an appointed religious token. This they considered an essential part of the ordinance. There must not only be bread, but it must be broken. "The bread which we *break*." "For we, being many, are one bread, and one body." One loaf, which signifies, according to their Lord's appointment, the unity of his body, and which was broken to commemorate both his sufferings for them, and their participation in the common benefits of his death. For this purpose they assembled. They "came together to break bread." They "continued in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They called this observance, also, by many other names. It was a "cup of blessing." It was a special occasion and token of thankfulness, because it reminded them of the most unspeakable gift of God to men, and displayed the wonderful mercies of divine redemption to their minds. No occasion could be more justly

one of blessing and thanksgiving than this. And when they took the cup, and all drank of it, according to the Lord's appointment, their pardoned, grateful souls, would truly bless the Lord, who had ransomed them with his own blood. The Lord had also "given thanks," when he first gave them the cup, and bid them drink of it in remembrance of him. And their participation in it, both re-called his thanksgiving for them, and awakened and excited their thanksgiving to him. Therefore they called it "the cup of blessing." For this reason this sacrament was afterwards very early called "the Eucharist," or "the thanksgiving," because it expressed "a thankful remembrance of the Saviour's death, and the innumerable benefits which this death had procured for sinful men. Thus we still often call it, and with entire propriety. It is an occasion on which, above all others, we ought to feel and to express sincere and grateful thanks to God, for the inestimable blessings which he has bestowed upon us in his dear Son.

5. The apostles called this sacrament, also, the "Communion of the body and blood of Christ." The body and blood of Christ, mean the incarnation and death of Christ; all that he did, and all that he suffered in the flesh, for guilty men; that obedience to the law, which gives us the adoption of sons, and that endurance of death in our stead, which blots out our transgressions, and cleanses us from all sin. In these blessed works and sufferings of the Saviour's incarnate state, and in all the triumphs and glories which arise from them, the gracious gift of God has bestowed upon men the right and privilege of participation. Who-soever will, may come, and take of the water of life freely. None can be forbidden to appropriate these inestimable mercies to themselves. The actual enjoyment of this partnership with Christ, this communion in his body and blood, the Holy Spirit gives to all who believe in him. "When he had overcome the sharpness of death, he did open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." This sacra

ment is the outward sign and token of this communion and fellowship with Christ, which the Holy Spirit gives to the soul within. And it is therefore called by the name of the heavenly gift, which it is intended to represent. This was so customary in the language of Holy Scripture, that the apostles felt no need of explanation in such an use. Of circumcision it was said, "This is my covenant," though it was only the token of the covenant. The paschal lamb was called "the Lord's passover," though it was only the sign of his passing over. The Saviour called himself "the door" and "the vine." St. Paul called the manna "spiritual meat," and the water from the rock "spiritual drink," and the Lord himself "that rock." He also calls Christ "our passover." So that to call the sign by the name of the thing which it represented was a perfectly familiar habit to his own mind, and to the minds of Christians for whom he wrote. And when he said to them in the same sentence, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry,—the cup of

blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" he taught them, as clearly as it was possible, not to exalt the outward perishing sign, but to remember the great spiritual blessings which it was designed to represent. This was the token of the blessed spiritual fellowship which they had with their Lord, and of the real and entire dependence with which their souls lived upon him.

6. The apostles called this sacrament also "the Lord's Supper," and "the Lord's Table," to indicate the real appointment of it by the Lord,—the authority with which it was established and enforced,—and the special purpose of fellowship with their Lord himself, which it illustrated and proclaimed. It was his table, his supper. His people were the guests whom he invited. They came to meet him. He was present to bless, and comfort, and sanctify them. The remembrance of this high and holy authority and presence of the Lord himself,

would correct and repress all levity of spirit, all possible abuse, or irreverent use of an institution so sacred and so impressive. The apostle uses these various titles with their several express connections. In the one case, he comforts Christians with the remembrance of their fellowship in Christ. In the other, he represses and warns them by reminding them of the authority and holiness of the Lord whom they now professed to serve. But in all, they equally maintained, and transmitted to the church, their reverent observance of their Lord's appointment.

VII.

DESIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. THE general design of the Lord's supper, in its divine institution by our Lord, has been sufficiently displayed in the previous chapter. "Do this in remembrance of me,"—was his personal command. It was a token appointed by him for his disciples, as a sign and pledge of their mutual agreement with each other, when they should be no longer visibly and outwardly together. In the language of our office for the solemnization of matrimony, that sacred appointment is called in reference to the parties, "the vow and covenant betwixt them made;"—and the ring which is used, is said to be "given and received as a token and pledge"—of this vow and covenant. With this idea of a token and pledge of remem-

brance, we are perfectly familiar. Friends in all the relations of human life, are accustomed to exchange these tokens with each other. They become important instruments for promoting and establishing mutual affection, and for perpetuating the remembrance of this affection, and of the persons from whom its particular expression has been received, in the periods of occasional or prolonged personal separation between the parties. The kind of remembrance, and the facts which ought to be combined in this remembrance, depend entirely upon the relations which subsist between the parties in the particular agreement. A token of remembrance between a parent and a child, involves very different facts for thought and meditation, from one between a husband and a wife. When we ascend to our relation to the divine Saviour who has appointed for us this token, there is nothing peculiar in the idea or purpose of a designated token of remembrance in itself. But there are very peculiar facts and relations, which in this remembrance

are to be included. Our obligations to him are inconceivably great, and the benefits we have received of him, are of inestimable value. The past mercies we have enjoyed by his gift are innumerable, both temporal and spiritual. We have nothing which we have not received from him. Our present dependence upon him is entire ;—in him we live and move, and have our being. In his hand our breath is, and his are all our ways. Our future hopes are all resting upon his fidelity and power. He alone is the shepherd, who is to feed us in green pastures, to lead us by the still waters, and to guide us in safety through the valley of the shadow of death. His perfect and everlasting righteousness forms the whole foundation of our hope in the day of judgment. The glory for which we look, is the crown of his obedience. The heaven we expect, is the blessedness and enjoyment of his presence. Where he is, there may we be also. To remember him, is to remember any or all of the amazing blessings which he has thus bestowed upon

the poor and the guilty, the unthankful and the evil. The relations which he sustains to us, are those which exhibit every possible benefit on his part, and every possible obligation on ours. There is no human relation of value and advantage to man, which is not employed to illustrate the higher blessings of some corresponding relation in him. We may remember him in any or all of these relations, for he fills them all. In them all, we are completely dependent upon him, upon his grace, his power, and his love. And this appointed token may be justly and properly used to bring him before our minds, and to awaken our affections towards him, under any of the aspects which he has so graciously adopted towards us. And as his blessed Spirit enables us to see the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, these varied relations of the Saviour, are like the different faces of some transparent crystal, from which the light is successively reflected in varied beauty to the eye. The simple di

rection is, Remember me,—and, Do this, as a token that you do remember me.

2. The apostles describe this design of remembrance, as in a *special* relation to the Saviour's death. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Our church impresses the same idea, in the catechism. "The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained, for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." The same special application is taught in the language of our communion office. "To the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which, by his precious bloodshedding, he hath obtained for us, he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort." This sacrament reminds us of the *fact* of this death, to which it was ap-

pointed to be a permanent witness in the church, and of which it has been a standing historical testimony in all ages since. Yes, the Saviour did actually die, and this constant observance has been an unceasing and undeniable evidence of the fact. It reminds us of the *nature* and *purpose* of this death. As a faithful *witness* to the truth, he witnessed his good confession, and sealed it with the shedding of his own blood. As a holy *example*, he suffered for us, that we should follow in his steps, and lay down our lives for him, and the word of his testimony. As a mighty *conqueror*, he spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them openly upon the cross. But especially as a *sacrifice* for our sins, he endured the cross, and despised the shame. His death was "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." It was an offering in the stead of man. An atonement, an expiation, a propitiation,—sufficient to cover and blot out all transgressions; procuring a free and entire re-

removal of all guilt, from those who should receive it; and giving to man, peace with God, through its priceless value accepted in his behalf. It made the crimson and the scarlet dye of man's transgression against God, as white as snow; and opened the way for the complete acceptance and justification of all believers. It reminds us of the *manner* of his death. Though spotless and innocent, and with no guile in his mouth, yet he was numbered with transgressors, and rejected of men. Though fearfully wronged and injured, yet he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and opened not his mouth. Though of a nature and dignity inconceivably exalted, yet he hid not his face from shame and spitting, and was mocked and buffeted by the hands of wicked men. Though living only to do good to men, yet he was scourged like the most degraded malefactor, and nailed, while living, upon a cross to die. Yes, all these dreadful and awakening facts of the Saviour's suffering and agony, are represented and called to mind by this ap-

pointed token of remembrance. It reminds us of the *cause* of his death. He was wounded for our transgressions. The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Sin,—our sins, were the cause of his death; and well may we look upon our sins with a hatred and loathing, peculiarly awakened by this remembrance. It reminds us of the *effect* of his death,—the benefits we receive thereby. His sufferings were the effect of our sins,—and our salvation is the effect of his sufferings. We have peace with God, in him. We have rest before God, through him. He was condemned, that we might be acquitted. He was crucified, that we might be forgiven. And we have now life forever, through his death once for all. All our present privileges and blessings have flowed out of this one offering, once made by him. And this appointed sacrament, not as a representation or a scenic display, but as a significant and precious token, appealing not to our sight and senses, but to the intelligent action

of our mind, and memory, and affections, shows forth the Lord's death, brings it under its various aspects, distinctly before our own minds, and recalls our remembrance particularly and gratefully to it.

3. But it shows also our personal *confidence* in that death. It declares very significantly the light under which we regard it, and the peculiar aspect of it, which we adopt and would present as our form of faith. It is a profession of our faith in the Saviour's death, as a sacrifice for us, and intended to declare to others our acceptance of that blessed Gospel which announces it, and which was thus proclaimed and sealed. The special object of this sacrament, and of our observance of it, is to maintain this great truth of an atonement for our sins in the Saviour's death. On no other ground can we make its observance of any value, or unite in it with any sentiment peculiar to itself. It is a declaration of our own consciousness of guilt, deserving the death which he endured; of our acknowledgment

of him as the great Mediator appointed for our ransom ; of our cheerful acceptance of this only way for pardon and life eternal, through his blood ; and of our recognition of his right to us, because he has bought us with a price, that we may glorify him in our bodies and our spirits, which are his. It is intended as a confession of the Lord Jesus among men, as the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world. A confession of our looking to him, that we may be saved, that our sins may be forgiven through his blood, and that our souls may be washed and cleansed by his atonement in our behalf. We thus kneel before the cross of him whom the world rejects; and in this solemn act declare that he is all our salvation and all our desire ; that we have no merit but in him ; and will make mention of his righteousness, even of his only, as the ground of our hope, or of our right to live, before God. No testimony could be more distinct or positive than that which has been constantly given here, that the faith of the church, the trust of the

people of God, has been in the gracious and voluntary death of the divine Saviour, as the real and only possible expiation of human guilt. This faith has always thus simply declared,—“Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, but a body hast thou prepared him who came to do thy will, O God ; by the which will, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.” And while the observance of this sacrament remains to witness in the church of God, in vain will men endeavor to banish the doctrine of divine atonement in the Saviour's death, or to drive out the precious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. This will show the Lord's death until he come ; and still testify in all ages, to sinners and to saints, the great truth, that he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, that we may reign with him forever.

4. This sacrament is designed to declare our

hope of the Lord's return. Its appointed limit of testimony was until the Lord come. We thus acknowledge our belief that he will come ; we thus declare all our expectations of triumph and safety to rest upon this coming of the Lord. He will come to be our Judge. The day is fixed before us, when we must stand at his judgment-seat, to give an account to him of all the things done in the body, whether good or evil. We here avow this solemn sense of our individual responsibility to him ; our certain expectation of an account before him of the whole character and fabric of our life. However others may reject and despise his authority, and the annunciations of his universal judgment, we declare that all our thoughts of responsibility are connected with that great event, to which we look without doubt. What an influence of restraint may this remembrance exercise ! What a reverence will it impress ! What an encouragement to duty ! What an excitement to fidelity to him ! But it is not with a slavish fear that we thus remember his

future appearance. No ! This is a token of our confidence in it, as the great event we desire. That will settle all the difficulties and inequalities in our present state. It will compensate for every loss and every trial on our way. It elevates us above the influence of mere human judgments ; and gives us motives of action which are not affected by earthly and transitory things. This sacred token of our Lord's fellowship with us, is as much a pledge of what he will do for us, as the testimony of what he has done. It speaks the language of hope, as well as of memory. If it reminds us of separation, it also reminds, with equal force, of return and meeting again. Did our Glorious Saviour come to earth and die ? The same Glorious Saviour will come to earth again to reign. The affection which it speaks, though it springs from the past, reaches forward to the future. He comes to be our Lord, and our portion forever. We shall enter with him to his glory, and go no more out. This is the testimony of our faith in this glorious appear-

ing. He has gone to prepare for us a mansion in his Father's house, and he will come again and receive us unto himself. Then shall we appear with him in glory. We thus comfort ourselves together with this blessed hope ; and encourage each other to patience unto the coming of the Lord. It is a solemn and affecting testimony and profession of this blessed hope in the midst of the church. The people of God may be now distressed, despised, persecuted, apparently forsaken. But "we believe that he shall come to be our Judge." "We, therefore, pray him to help his servants whom he hath redeemed with his most precious blood ; and to make them to be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting." And as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show our faith in the Lord's coming, and our future hope in him.

5. Beyond this important purpose of profession and avowal of our faith and hope, the Lord's Supper is designed to be an *instrument* of spiritual blessing. Our catechism says, that

a sacrament, being both an outward visible sign, and an inward spiritual grace,—is also a means whereby we receive the inward spiritual grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof. This result is of necessity involved in the views which we have already expressed. A token of real mutual affection, sincerely expressing the reciprocated love, memory, and hope of the heart, in any of the social relations of human life, becomes an instrument of perpetuating and increasing that affection. The degree of its power of operation, of its efficacy in action, will depend upon the fidelity, the earnestness, the reality of the feeling with which it is possessed and employed. This is an uniform design of such a token. The desire is to grow with the gratification. The love is to be enlarged by the expression. This is a perfectly rational and intelligent operation and result in human experience. It presents a state and action of the human mind with which men are perfectly familiar; and of the influence of which, multitudes are conscious, who have

no ability to give an explanation of the principles on which it is founded. This principle of action becomes equally true and certain, when we pass from the regions of mere earthly affection, to the Christian's love for his divine Lord. There, tokens of affection faithfully observed, become instruments of affection constantly increasing. Signs of grace given to the soul, faithfully and truly expressed, become means of grace still more abundantly to be given to the soul for future expression. When of the Saviour's fulness, we actually receive grace, in its exercise and improvement according to his will, we receive grace upon grace, for future duty and future faithfulness, as he shall call for it. This result comes in a faithful use of the sacraments, and depends entirely upon that faithful use, without making them in any degree mere instruments of an outward power residing in themselves, or acts of an external ministerial authority, of which those who receive them are but the objects. How clear, and how appropriate, this appointed

operation seems! And with what perfect justice in such a view, may we speak of the sacraments as being means of grace! This is the view which our church gives us of both the sacraments, teaching us in the 25th article, "that we should duly use them; and in such only as worthily receive the same, have they a wholesome effect and operation." This is the view which is particularly given of the design of the Lord's Supper in the 28th article. "The supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another; but rather it is a sacrament" (a holy sign) "of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper-

is faith." The language of the catechism is to the same effect. "The outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper, is Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received. The inward part, or the thing signified, is the Body and Blood of Christ, which are spiritually taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. The benefits whereof we are partakers thereby, are the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine." The Holy Spirit gives us in our hearts faith and fellowship in Christ. He leads us to express this faith and fellowship in this sacred sign appointed by Christ. He makes this sign then, an instrument for increasing and confirming our faith and fellowship, by his own power. He teaches, and enables us spiritually, and after a secret and heavenly manner, in our own hearts by faith, in meditation, and confidence, and love, to embrace and rest upon, the glorious works of our Saviour's incarnation and death, the merit and the power of his

body and blood offered for us. Thus in this appointed token and pledge, we meet the Lord, and he meets us: we dwell with him, and he dwells with us: we offer and present ourselves to him, and he gives and seals himself to us. Our faith is confirmed, and our grace is increased. Our souls are strengthened and refreshed, by new communications of the Saviour's love, by new, and clearer, and firmer views of his body and blood. And the sacrament becomes not only a sign of grace, but a means of grace; not merely a token of love, but an instrument for increasing love; not simply a pledge, but a real, active and effectual bond of mutual fellowship and devotion. Christ is ours, and we are Christ's. And we go forward to future duty with more zeal, to future trial with more confidence, to future suffering with more hope, to future usefulness with more affection, to future labor and loss with more perseverance and patience of hope, unto the end. By the attending blessing and promised presence and power of the Holy

Ghost the Comforter,—this divine ordinance, the holy pledge of a Saviour's love, the continued remembrance and monitor of his death, the sacred earnest of his coming again; has been made according to its design the means of inestimable grace, to our great and endless comfort. We are able to say more distinctly and affectionately, on every succeeding occasion of this blessed commemoration, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." We "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" we find it "a divine and comfortable thing, thus to come to such a heavenly feast, and to be received as worthy partakers of that holy table." We render still more "humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God our Heavenly Father, that he hath given his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also, to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy Sacrament."

VIII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER A FEAST OF CHARITY.

1. The class of subjects on which we now enter, will bring us to consider the special *office* or appointed form, provided for us in our own church, for the administration of the Lord's Supper or holy communion. Among all the various forms of worship in our liturgy, this is one of the most perfect and most instructive. The longer we are accustomed to it, the more we learn to prize it. The more frequently we engage in it, with a mind and spirit accordant with it, the more we find its beauties and excellences brought out to our view. It is full of deep and clear instruction in the Gospel scheme, and the Gospel promises. And we may well devote a few chapters, at this stage of our consideration of our fellow

ship with Christ, to a full examination of the system on which this service is framed, and the teaching which it is intended to impart. Our office for the communion is arranged in a very clear form, and founded on very distinct and manifest principles,—principles which are thoroughly scriptural, and beautifully appropriate in that employment of them, which is here presented. We will consider this office, however, not in any attempted critical history or exposition of it, as a liturgy descending from ancient times, and, in some of its parts, the very oldest liturgical forms of worship in the Christian church,—though this would be very instructive and valuable, if it were in the line of our present subject. But we will look at it in a simple, practical exhibition of its scriptural character and principles, as they are actually spread before us. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, this is the form of words which we are taught to use. It is a form of most sound words, for the use and maintenance of which, we shall find abundant reason, and

from which we may gain most important instruction.

2. The communion office presents the Lord's Supper before us, under a variety of aspects. The FIRST is that of a *Feast of Charity*,—a Love Feast. Such was it called in apostolic times. As such it is referred to in the New Testament, in several places.* Such may we now esteem it, with great propriety and truth. We meet here, in a holy communion with each other, and with all the company of believers, of God's faithful people, throughout the world. It is the outward token of that one communion and fellowship, in which God has knit together the whole company of his elect, in the mystical body of his Son. It marks us all as claiming to be the body of Christ, and each of us members in particular. It is an occasion, therefore, which calls for the expression of mutual Christian love among the disciples of our Lord. His command to them was, "Love one another, as I have loved you." His apos-

* Jude, 12. 1 Corinthians, 5 : 8. 2 Peter, 2 : 13.

tle exhorts them to "keep the feast, not with the old leaven" of their sinful and corrupt nature, "neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." To meet this divine demand, and upon this very ground of scriptural appointment, has the office for our communion been thus arranged. It presents the operation of Christian love, as connected with this sacred feast, under *four* distinct aspects, and impresses each of them successively upon the minds of those who here unite together.

3. The first operation of Christian love here suggested, is an *abstinence from mutual evil and injury*. This surely is the lowest stand of love,—its fundamental action. There can be no love without this. And with this, therefore, our office sets out in the introductory rubric, which stands here as the very porch of the sanctuary. Through this portal, every Christian must come to the table of the Lord. Abstinence from mutual injury, among the members

of the Christian body, becomes here, in their relation to each other, a most serious and important obligation. For this we must all be held responsible to each other, and to the church. And our church, in starting here, reiterates the apostle's solemn admonition: "Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." In descending into particulars upon this subject, there is described, first, the injury of *an evil example*. "If among those who come to be partakers of the holy communion, the minister shall know any man to be an open and notorious evil liver, he shall admonish him that he presume not to come to the Lord's table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented, and amended his former evil life." We must never forget that we are held responsible to the church of God, for the character which we display in their midst. A holy and consistent example in the members of the church, is one of the most efficient and important instruments of spiritual benefit to others, and of edifying

the body of Christ. They who walk watchfully, walk usefully. They who present an evil example, become instruments of serious evil to others. By "evil living," in such a connection, we must also mean evil living according to the proper Christian standard of duty. It is not merely gross, outward immorality. It is transgression of the rules and principles of the Gospel. There may be such a life when it is concealed from human view, and must be left wholly to the judgment and vindication of God. But if our sinfulness be open and known, so that it becomes an example to others, this is also a subject of direct responsibility to the church. We need not go into a particular description of such conduct. For this we have not room. The life of a child of God, and a child of the light, our church declares must be in all virtue and godliness of living. We must walk among our fellow-Christians, to their edification. The law of Christian love forbids our engaging in any evil,—requires us to abstain even from the ap-

pearance of evil; which of our weak brethren we may destroy, or cause to stumble, by our sinfulness of life, we can never tell. O that we may ever consider this! How much evil an unholy temper, a fretful spirit, a prayerless habit of life, a forsaking the worship of God, a yielding to the vain indulgences of the world, a selfish and harsh pursuit of earthly objects, may do to those whom we are bound as Christians to strengthen and hold up, as the feeble members of the Saviour's flock!

4. There is mentioned second, the injury of *positive personal* wrong; "to have done any wrong to his neighbors by word or deed." This is a step beyond the mere silent influence of unholy example. Alas! how much wrong is done in the church of God by words merely! What evil influence is thus often exercised upon the reputations and usefulness of others! The Christian's duty is to exercise a constant vigilance over every tendency to this. It is not only our duty to originate no evil, but to report none of others, where there

is not absolute obligation to do so. Speak not evil one of another. The law of love requires us to make and to express the kindest and most tender judgments of our fellow-men, particularly of our fellow-Christians. And a single unjust interpretation, or harsh suspicion, uttered in regard to another, may often perpetuate a wrong that we have no subsequent power to redress, or even to arrest. But our mutual injuries do not stop in words. There is wrong done also in deed. Often, in the positive infliction of evil upon their persons or estates, by depriving them in any way of that which is their own. It may be the mere negative act of withholding from them that which is their right, refusing them benefits to which they are justly entitled. This will not refer merely to matters of outward worldly wealth, but to all the duties which arise out of every relation in life, and which give to others just expectations that we are bound to fulfil. An influence fearfully wrong and destructive may be exercised over others, without touching a

farthing of their outward property. We may encourage them in evil, we may lead them to unholy society, we may establish for them false principles of conduct, we may minister to them temptations to transgression, we may thus do them essential wrong in deed, though we have violated no principle of mere earthly justice in our relations to them. In our connection with the church of God, we must judge ourselves by the Christian standard of duty, and not by the mere light and judgment of the world around us. We must think of the peculiar claims and obligations which the Gospel has established. Our perception of these obligations of personal duty must also go much farther than will merely escape the condemnation of outward human discipline. We are bound, not only to avoid evil, but to do good to all.

5. But this enumeration of evils in our Christian fellowship goes much farther than this. There is the injury of malicious and sinful *temper and feeling* towards our fellow-Christians. "The same order shall the minister use with

those, betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign." The heart and temper of the Christian are held responsible to the church, as well as his example and his relative acts. He is bound to love. The great principle of the Gospel is mutual love. This heavenly spirit it is our duty to cultivate and exercise. Our Christian brethren have a right to the possession of our kind and affectionate feelings towards them. There ought to be a godly unity. Whatever violates this, is mutual injury. It may be the injury of unforgiving remembrance of wrongs received. We are to forgive freely, as we expect forgiveness. This does not always imply the complete restoration of confidence in the personal character of those from whom we have suffered wrong. Confidence must be governed by our conviction of their worthiness of confidence. But it must put away all unkind remembrance of the wrong received. It may be the injury of wrong construction of the motives and conduct of others. Christian love thinketh no evil.

It puts the best possible construction upon the conduct of all. The members of the Christian household have a right to the measure of confidence and regard from each other which is really due to their various characters and positions. The withholding of this, in our cherished views and opinions of them, is an injury done to them. It is certainly possible to think too favorably of the characters of others. But even this is the safer error, both for the happiness of the mind which retains the judgment, and for the rights of the one who is the object of it. These are very partial illustrations of the first view of the law of Christian love, which our Prayer Book presents in connection with this Feast of Charity. Many questions might be started upon this important subject, and a long discussion might be maintained. But we have no room for it here. The practical point to be considered is very distinct. Our fellowship with Christ makes also our fellowship one with another. This holy sacrament is the special sign and token of this fellowship.

And our church lays out, first of all, this special path to its proper observance. Abstain from all appearance of evil, one to another. Should Christians regard faithfully this one admonition, and set no evil example in the church, and do no wrong either in word or deed to others, and exercise no unkind or injurious feelings towards any, what a blessing would this one faithful walk of Christian watchfulness bring upon the church of God! How much real and abiding good might we all accomplish simply by doing no evil! And this the Lord requires, and this our church requires, in connection with this holy ordinance, at the very outset of its observance. It is intended as a feast and token of love. None can come to it acceptably or usefully who do not mean and endeavor to walk faithfully according to the law of love.

6. The second aspect of this communion as a Feast of Charity, which our Prayer Book exhibits in the communion office, is *the Law* which regulates and commands the exercise of

Christian love. This is the royal law. This is the fulfilling of the whole law. And although none of us ever do or can fulfil it perfectly, yet it is placed, as our rule of duty, at the very commencement of our worship on this occasion. And while we pass through the portal which says, Do no evil, Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, we find this law of positive requisition and duty to be the entrance here to our proper fellowship, one with another. How very beautifully and affectingly is this arranged! With what impressive circumstances and language, do we first pray for a heart to receive and follow the divine commands! "The Table at the communion time, stands in the body of the church or in the chancel." It is not an altar for sacrifice. It is a table for communion and fellowship. It is not an occasion for mere priestly ministration. It is a gathering of the people of God for mutual edification and spiritual nourishment. "Having a fair white linen cloth upon it." A silent preacher, but a most effective one! It

displays to the eye, that which the word speaks to the ear, and the Spirit to the heart,—the mind, and character, with which we should assemble for our communion there. It witnesses to us of required purity, tenderness, equality, and union, while it stands a monument and token of our fellowship one with another, and a provision for its appointed enjoyment. With this preparation to impress the mind simply and affectionately, we unite in prayer. It is the language of our Christian family prayer, the Lord's prayer. We are there, as the children of one household, to one Father in heaven. We seek together the glory of his name, and the spreading of his truth. We come as wandering children, to acknowledge our offences, and ask to be forgiven and received again. We come as feeble children, and seek for grace to help and keep us in the ways of the divine commandments in time to come. We unite to give him all the glory for his grace and goodness. With this prayer, which the Saviour's flock so justly

love, we offer a peculiar and appropriate supplication besides. We acknowledge God our Father to be the searcher of all hearts, and to know and understand us thoroughly. We beseech him to cleanse and sanctify us by his Holy Spirit, that we may humbly receive, and affectionately fulfil his holy law, that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name. Thus we listen to the proclamation of his sacred will. It is in the Ten Commandments of our unchanging God; the perpetual law for his family on earth; the eternal law which in its principles lasts far beyond the earth itself. It is also the Saviour's gracious compend of the whole law, which constitutes his peculiar law, the royal law of his heavenly kingdom. It requires entire and eternal love to God. It commands universal, protecting, active love to men. This holy law is thus proclaimed in a most affecting position and connection. It is thus incorporated into the very heart of Christianity. It is not abrogated as a rule of life, by that grace which

has accomplished its provisions in the obedience of a Saviour, and provided forgiveness for our transgressions in the shedding of his blood;—but is established and confirmed as the binding rule of his household;—so that “we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.” It is here bound on to the very feast of Christian love; united to the very ordinance which proclaims and celebrates the death that has obtained for us forgiveness of our guilt, and deliverance from its condemnation. What increased sanctions are given to it by this connection! All the memories of a Saviour’s sufferings and death cluster around it. His dying hand seems to hold it out to us, for our new obedience. His dying breath appears to utter it for our more abiding memory. His abounding grace seems to establish it the more strongly and entirely. And it comes to us now, not only with the voice of authority, but with the privilege and constraint of love. We are thus reminded in the clearest manner, that our profession is a profession of practical holiness and love

and that when we meet together at the Lord's Supper, we unite in the acknowledgment of the duty and privilege of our united subjection to this law of divine purity and love. Well then do we unite to pray, that this law may be written upon our hearts, and they may be inclined and purposed to obey it. These are the living tablets on which the Holy Spirit writes his law,—and in doing which, he teaches the peculiar distinction of Christian obedience. He makes it an obedience of affection and principle ; an inward living obedience to a law, the value and power of which, we feel and love. Well do we ask in the most extensive and comprehensive language, that he would direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of his laws and the works of his commandments, that through his mighty protection both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul, in the holy happy way of life which has thus been opened to us. Was ever language more rich, or full, or appropriate, than this closing, grateful prayer, with which

we acknowledge the authority of the divine law, and implore its everlasting dominion over us? This is the law of our Christian fellowship—the rule which is laid down for us, according to which our relations in this fellowship are to be governed. This is the second aspect which is given us here of the Lord's Supper, as a feast of love—displaying the path of active duty, of Christian usefulness, of labor for the Saviour's glory, and for the salvation of men, to which this sacred ordinance leads and binds us. May we all have grace, faithfully to follow in this appropriate and beautiful teaching of the church we love, as we thus profess ourselves the servants of Christ.

7. The third operation of Christian love, which is presented as especially connected with this holy sacrament, is *active mutual sympathy and beneficence*. The principle of sympathy, or communion among the family of God, lies at the very foundation of our faith, and is made one of the articles of our daily avowal. "I believe in the communion of saints." They

are all partakers of one scheme of hopes, and privileges, and trials. They have one hope, one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one fellowship. Like light from one sun, or like water from one fountain, they receive the same Divine Spirit, to lead them to the one glorious atonement and the one perfect righteousness which has been offered for them. Their present cares and burdens are also the same. These may vary in occasional incidents, but in the principles and in the general course of their whole experience, they remarkably agree. Their future prospects are the same. One home, in the presence of one glorious Lord, provided for them all. One crown of life and righteousness, merited and preserved for each. One Everlasting Father to acknowledge and receive them together to himself. Here is the foundation of Christian sympathy. The law of the Saviour's household is, that his people shall bear each other's burdens. It is the law of his providence over them. The poverty, or sorrow, or pain, which one endures to-day

may be laid upon another to-morrow. It is the law of his Gospel among them. The burdens from which they are individually rescued in actual endurance, they must bear in affectionate sympathy. An unsympathizing Christian seems quite an anomaly in the Saviour's family. The whole influence of the Gospel, when it is received into the heart, is to lead to a tender regard for the infirmities and sufferings of others. For this reason, active beneficence always forms a part of our communion worship, as a feast of love. When the law of love has been proclaimed, then are we commanded to provide alms for men, and to offer of our substance, as grateful oblations to God. The *rule* which is to govern our distribution to the needy, is the sacred Word of God. This is read in appropriate selections, while the gathering of our Christian offerings is made. The selection of the passages of Holy Scripture for this purpose, brings out the *motive* which is to govern us in such a ministration, the glory of our Heavenly Father; the *objects* of our boun-

ty, the poor, the sick, the laboring of our Saviour's family ; the *measure* of our bestowal, according to our ability in the sight of God, the rich giving gladly their much, the poor imparting cheerfully their little ; the *spirit* with which it is to be done, a liberal, cheerful spirit, glad to distribute to the necessities of others, feeling that in doing this we are giving to Christ, and acting for his sake ; the blessed *hope* which is connected with this exercise of Christian love, that God will accept us, according to that which we have, if it truly proceed from love, though the actual gift may be small ; the *acknowledgment* that we cannot have the love of God in us, if we shut up our compassions from our fellow-men. How remarkably instructive and appropriate are these selected testimonies from the Word of God ! And how justly do they appertain to that meeting for Christian worship which is intended to commemorate God's unspeakable gift of love to man ! This is not, therefore, to be regarded by us in such a connection, as a mere casting of a trifling

pittance of money to the poor. It is to be considered as an expression of grateful acknowledgment to God, whose mercies have so exalted us, and who gives us the privilege of being workers together with him, in feeling pity for the sorrowing, and exercising mercy upon the needy and oppressed. Not that there is any merit in the alms of men, or excellence in any human acts. But that we are permitted to do everything as unto the Lord, and to have in every exercise of human sympathy the higher motive of glorifying him. Therefore the directions in our communion-office in this connection are made so particular and precise. There must be "a decent basin provided for the purpose." There must be "fit persons appointed to receive the alms for the poor, and other devotions of the people, whilst these sentences are reading." They must "reverently bring it to the Priest." He must "humbly present and place it upon the Holy Table." The service is far more than a mere gift of money. It is an expression of Christian

gratitude and sympathy. It is a token of Christian fellowship and love. It is an active utterance and sign of the mind and heart of the people of God, assembled to commemorate a Saviour's dying love, both towards each other, as partakers of common trials and a common hope, and towards him who is the comforter of their trials, and the foundation of their hope. It is therefore an act of sacred worship, and we solemnly ask our gracious God to receive and accept it as such. It is a suitable occasion for the exercise of the most liberal and generous provisions, for the spiritual wants, as well as for the bodily necessities of our fellow-men. And we ought habitually to do, with sincere affection, all that we really can do on such occasions, in gladly imparting of our substance to those who are in need,—feeling that it is a privilege to spend for the Saviour's glory, in the salvation of men, when we assemble at this feast of love, which proclaims how he has been spent for us, who

when he was rich, became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.

8. The fourth operation of Christian love, as it is connected with the Lord's Supper, is *intercessory prayer*. The admonition against mutual evil, the law of mutual love, the active communication of our means of personal relief, will result in our union in affectionate prayer, both for those who do not require any other benefit from us, and for those whom, though they need, we have no direct power to reach. "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's church militant." We have been admonished to remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of all, with whom we are directly connected. We have been called upon to love all our fellow-Christians and fellow-men, as we love ourselves. We have been permitted to contribute of our earthly wealth, to ease the burdens of some of our suffering brethren. But we have not yet reached all whom we are allowed to bless. We have still the flowing blessing of prayer, with which to fill up all the vacancies

that must still remain unsupplied. Let us pour out our love in prayer, to reach the needs and the sorrows of all our brethren in Christ. Let us plead for them in all their warfare, in all their sufferings, and in all their labors, for Christ's sake. "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's church militant," wherever they are, whoever they are. Our prayers may reach those whom we have no other power to find. Our prayers may bless those who ask no other kindness at our hands. Let us pray for all. And what a prayer it is! Is it not the most comprehensive and beautiful, the most appropriate and full, the most truly framed after the Saviour's prayer in the 17th chapter of St. John, of all that we have ever seen in the language of men? How it covers, as with a shield, all the soldiers and the servants of Christ! How it breathes the sweet spirit of unity and concord, in the Christian church! How it exalts the authority of the truth of God, as taught in his holy Word! How it acknowledges the dominion of God

over the rulers and governors of men, and calls to mind their responsibilities, and their weakness without him! How it elevates the prosperity of his Gospel, as an object, beyond all others, committed by him to them! How it realizes the solemnity of the sacred ministry, and the importance both of holy instruction and of holy example, in those who fill it! How it opens the whole bosom of the church for the dews of God's Spirit, and implores for all, the enjoyment of a Gospel hope, and the fruitfulness of a Gospel life! How it penetrates the abodes of the children of adversity, and forgets none who are in any suffering under the gracious visitations of God! How it rejoices in a remembrance of the triumphs which Christ has given, to those who have finished their conflicts, and are militant no longer! How it reaches forward, as the only single self-appropriated petition in the whole compass of this wonderful prayer, to the blessed hope of finishing our own warfare, and becoming in our turn, partakers of his heavenly kingdom!

O, this is the communion of saints! This is the realizing of a living membership in one body. This is the precious enjoyment of that fellowship, one with another, which they have, whom the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. This is the united acknowledgment which they rejoice to make: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And this is the clear and affecting exhibition, which our church makes of this holy communion, as a feast of love. We begin its whole celebration, by going out of ourselves, to love one another. And thus far, have asked nothing for ourselves, but that we may have grace so to love one another, as he has loved us. It would be impossible to speak too strongly, of the wisdom and beauty of this arrangement of our church, for our worship on such occasions. But this is only the introduction to the celebration of the ordinance, as an act of special commemoration of the Saviour's personal love to us. We are taught, first, to follow his example, in going out to do good;

in not seeking our own things; in exercising tenderness and love for others; that a mind which thus loves to be like him, may be the more ready and able to remember him, and the more prepared to commemorate and to receive him, in the fulness of his personal grace to ourselves. This is a most precious and important view of the Lord's Supper,—this appointed token of our entire dependence on Christ. It is a truly evangelical view of this sacrament, and is accurately accordant with all the principles on which the ordinance is founded, and all the purposes which it is designed to accomplish. But it is only one view of the many, which our communion office presents to us. And we will proceed from this, to consider the others in succession.

IX.

THE LORD'S SUPPER, AN INSTRUMENT OF PERSONAL BENEFIT.

1. WE have already spoken of this point, in some of its connections, (ch. iv. § 7, and ch. vii. § 5.) We have laid down the principles, first, that no spiritual effects are to be expected from a sacrament, as a mere outward sign or ceremony; and second, that the spiritual effects flowing from our use of sacraments, depend entirely upon the state of mind with which they are used, and are really effects flowing out of that state of mind. The blessings of sacraments come as new gifts of grace from the divine Spirit, to the heart which has received and improved his previous gifts. From his fullness, we receive grace for grace, or grace upon grace; continually accumulating and enlarging

supplies of strength and power to do the will of God. A sacrament in its outward sign, we must remember, is not the mere material element which is employed. It is the whole rite which includes the use of this element here, for its specially-appointed purpose. "The outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper, is bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received, for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."—(Catechism.) But even the whole outward sign completed, is only one part of the sacrament. A sacrament consists of "two parts,—the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace." And when we speak of the advantages, the spiritual blessings, resulting to us from the use of sacraments, we must be very careful to maintain this remembrance of the real nature and character of a sacrament in our minds. When we speak of the Lord's Supper, this whole idea must be present to the mind. It is the assembling of

his people together, to partake together of bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received, as a holy sign of our redemption by Christ's death; in the observance of which, those who rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, are truly partakers of the body and blood of Christ, which are received and eaten by them in faith, and only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. (Art. 28.) The efficacy of sacraments to the souls of believers, depends upon the union of these two important parts, the absence of either of which, of necessity destroys the sacrament. The holy table in the body of the church or chancel, the fair white linen cloth upon it, the bread and wine, the appointed minister to officiate, may all be there. But it can be no sacrament until the church gather around, and take and eat and drink, according to the Saviour's command. It is nothing, unless they unite to communicate. But even all this outward sign may be there in perfect order, and yet there be no sacrament, because

no single heart is truly, by faith, commemorating a Saviour's death, and spiritually feeding upon him. There may be an hundred persons outwardly engaged, and but one whose heart is really living upon Christ by the Holy Ghost. To that single person only, is it truly the sacrament of the death of Christ. "The wicked who are there, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; yet in nowise are they partakers of Christ, but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing." (Art. 29.) Yet when the heart is really engaged, when the Holy Spirit has given to the soul a true fellowship with Christ, and leads that soul in a heavenly and spiritual manner, by faith, to feed upon the glorious works and sufferings of a Saviour in its behalf, the blessings of this divine appointment are great indeed. And we may well speak of it, under our present head, as an instrument of personal benefit.

2. In our communion office, this thought of *spiritual personal benefit* forms the subject of the first preparatory exhortation. When the minister giveth warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion, he is to read this exhortation to the people, or as much of it as, in his discretion, he may think convenient. The fundamental idea which it presents, is spiritual benefit to ourselves. It awakens the thought in us, Do you not need spiritual blessings for your own soul? Do you not desire to obtain such blessings for yourselves? Then the Saviour hath provided them for you here, and invites you to come and partake of the mercies which he freely offers. It is "the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ," which, "through God's assistance, is to be administered to all such as are religiously and devoutly disposed" to unite in it. Its purpose is to "strengthen and refresh their souls;" to comfort and encourage them in the conflicts and duties of their warfare for Christ; to console and animate them under the trials

and sorrows which they endure for Christ; and to inspire them with a religious and holy hope of the presence and glory of Christ, who for the joy before him endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. It is to "be received by them, in remembrance of his meritorious cross and passion, by which alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven." It sets before us, for our encouragement and assurance, complete forgiveness and everlasting glory in the perfect righteousness and atoning death of the only-begotten Son of God, offered and endured in our behalf. It calls for our "most humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, that he hath given us his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy sacrament." It is not merely the token of our remembrance of him as past, but of our living dependence upon him now, as actually present with us; formed

in our hearts by faith, dwelling in our hearts by love; fed upon in our souls as our meat and drink; strengthening us by his sufficient grace; becoming the absolute life of our life; so that we can truly say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This important idea of personal spiritual benefit, is the foundation of this instructive and solemn exhortation. It is because the Lord's Supper is considered "so divine and comfortable a thing to them who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to those who will presume to receive it unworthily," that it is the duty of the minister to exhort those whom he addresses, "in the mean season, so to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, or sacrament, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine their own consciences, that they may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, in the marriage

garment required by God in Holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy table." The subject of preparation, or personal qualifications for the due engagement in this sacred act of worship, to which the exhortation before us leads the minds of those to whom it speaks, we will subsequently consider. Our present view regards only the spiritual benefits which are made dependent upon this acquired preparation, and which are thus actually bestowed.

3. These benefits are called by the general terms, "Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ." They are so called by the apostle, as we have already seen. (Ch. vi. § 4.) They are repeatedly so called in subsequent parts of our communion office. "The Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ." "Grant us so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may ever-

more dwell in him, and he in us." "That we may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood." "That we may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him." These are all expressions in our office. The actual body and blood of Christ were local, material, temporary things. His human flesh and blood, though they saw no corruption, yet were changed from a natural body to a spiritual body, and passed away; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The actual body and blood of Christ is therefore as much a past and irrevocable thing, as the actual body and blood of any one for whom Christ hath died. Literally, therefore, no man can be a partaker of his body and blood. And to eat his flesh and blood in the gross material sense, is so beyond the possible line of reasonable religious thought, that probably no mind but the most ignorant and superstitious, could ever imagine it. It is, therefore,

wholly a figurative form of speech. It describes the purposes of mediation for man, for which a body was prepared for the Saviour, and the Word was made flesh! It describes the works of meritorious obedience and sacrifice,—the righteousness and atonement,—which he accomplished in this body of flesh and blood which he graciously assumed. It describes the whole results of justification, holiness, and glory, which have come from his triumphant partaking of flesh and blood, for all who believe in him. The body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, his wonderful incarnation and death, have purchased and procured for sinful men an everlasting glory, a complete and unchangeable redemption. For us, to be partakers of this body and blood, is to be partakers of the merit and glory of a divine Saviour. All things are ours, when we are Christ's, for Christ is God's. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. If we are partakers of Christ, we are partakers with Christ. He has redeemed us from the curse

of the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons. Because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,—we are led by the Spirit of God, and are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,—so that we suffer with him, and are also glorified together. But this body and blood of Christ, are invisible and spiritual treasures and blessings. Their possession and enjoyment, are attributes of the soul within. They are privileges of a divine gift, and of a heavenly ministration; the glorious merit of the Saviour, given to the soul of the believer, by the ministration of the Holy Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. In these glorious merits of the Saviour, who became a partaker of flesh and blood for them, sinful men are thus permitted to have *communion*. That is joint property or partnership. The term fellowship does not fully convey the idea of the original word, because it seems to imply merely the participation of common feelings or emotions. But the word

really signifies the *right* which several persons have in a common and undivided property. A right, of which there may be both a legal possession and an actual enjoyment. Thus sinful men are really made partners with Christ. They have the legal right in his gracious bestowal of this privilege in his new covenant upon them. They have the actual enjoyment of this right, when the Holy Spirit enlightens and transforms them in the renewing of their minds, and makes them to know the things which are freely given to them of God. The actual right to the full blessings of redemption, men have as sinners. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. In all that the Son of God has done for man, as his Redeemer, the whole race has the right of inheritance. "For Adam's lost race, he hath opened a fountain." He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. It is upon this ground that the message of his salvation becomes glad tidings to guilty men, and

that in proclaiming it, his ministers urge them to turn and live, and not die. Yes—Christ has given to sinful men the right to live, as completely as they possess the right to breathe the air, or to traverse the ocean. All his works of merit and mercy for the guilty, are offered as the common property of mankind. Who-soever will, may have them. None can be forbidden to appropriate them. None can be refused who truly come to them. But while all men have the right of this communion, all men have not the *enjoyment* of it. The right to walk in a public park, or the right to sail on the seas, may belong to multitudes who never embrace or improve it. As sinners, we have all a common right to that which Christ has done for us. His Gospel is free to all who will receive it. But it is only when, with a consciousness of our guilt, a real conviction of our lost and ruined state, a godly sorrow for our sin, and an affectionate return of our hearts to him, we come to him, that we make this right available for benefit to us. By faith

in him, which is the operation of his Spirit, we put in the claim which he has given us; we assert our interest in him; we sue out our part in his mercy. And we thus become partakers of the heavenly benefit. And though it cannot be said that one sinner has any more right to the mercy of the Gospel than another, yet there are multitudes who never assert the common right, multitudes who absolutely reject it, or indifferently cast it away, and who thus perish in their sins, though Christ has given them a right to salvation. But, as believers, we improve this right; we receive the offer; we accept the terms; we take advantage of the open door; we go to him freely and confidently, for the blessings which he has freely and faithfully promised. His love has conferred the title. His Spirit enables us to appropriate it. His grace is able to save unto the uttermost. His Spirit makes us to fly to him for refuge, and to find the hope which he sets before us an anchor to our souls, both sure and steadfast. We are thus partakers of his most blessed body and

blood,—we truly eat his flesh and drink his blood,—we dwell in him and he dwelleth in us. Our bodies are made clean by his body, and our souls are washed in his most precious blood. Our guilt is all forgiven, and we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The reality of this spiritual feeding upon Christ, is so clear, that our church teaches us, in the office of communion for the sick, “if, for any just impediment, the sick man do not receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, the minister shall instruct him, that if he dō truly repent of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefor, he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, profitably to his soul’s health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.”

5. Of this blessed spiritual communion with Christ, the Lord’s Supper is the appointed

token, and this token duly used, becomes further an *instrument* of spiritual benefit. It becomes to such an heart a most precious and important means of grace. And in the outward rite of partaking of bread and wine, the soul feeds within, by faith, and love, and meditation, upon the glorious Saviour, whose boundless love and merit are thus exhibited and brought to view. It is the avowal and expression of our love for him, as an ever-living, all-powerful, and all-sufficient Friend. It is the sign and token of our union with him, and our choice of him as our only Lord and Ruler. It is a blessed and affecting method of pleading with him for the bestowal of his promised gifts of grace upon us,—a lifting up of our souls to Christ, and a lifting up of Christ in all his excellence and power before us, as our living and prevailing Advocate and Lord. It is made thus by the Holy Spirit an occasion of peculiar blessing, an instrument of increased grace, and holiness, and joy to us. We are enabled to discern more clearly our completeness

in Christ. We are taught to depend upon him more simply, and to trust him more entirely. Our commemorations of his love to us, and his labors for us, are made the means of making us more earnestly, the imitators, subjects, and followers, of the Lord whose love we celebrate. Our hearts are more closely united to him, and we more earnestly long for and cultivate, an everlasting union of interests and mind with him. And when we thus duly receive these holy mysteries, or sacred emblems of divine truth, we are made partakers of something far beyond and far higher than them, even the righteousness and glory of our blessed Lord. The Saviour is with us, personally and actually present, though unseen. This sacrament is the token and pledge of his abiding presence with us. This is a real presence of Christ. "Where two or three are assembled in my name, there am I also, in the midst of them." "Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." There is no presence of Christ in the bread and wine,—

nor with them,—nor in any manner connected with them. They are but poor dead elements of bread and wine throughout the whole observance. By no consecration of a priesthood can their nature be changed. The united participation of the people of God employs them for an holy use. The Saviour makes the occasion, one of special gifts of grace, to those who truly seek, and truly remember him there. The occasion is one that calls for the deepest spiritual reverence of the mind towards Christ. But to have, or to try to cultivate, as a substitute for this, a mysterious, superstitious reverence for these perishing material elements, is most idolatrous and guilty. To cultivate this kind of unintelligible reverence for the outward signs as if it were an expression of real reverence to Christ, is mere will worship, which will draw the mind away from him, and hide his grace and excellence from our view. How well does our church say, “Lift up your hearts.” Let us ever try really, above all outward means, to “lift them up unto the Lord.”

Thus will this divinely-appointed sacrament, be made the instrument by the Holy Spirit, of strengthening and refreshing our souls, by the body and blood of Christ. We shall truly discern the Lord's body,—we shall know him the more clearly, and love him the more completely. We shall set out anew in his service, and with increased determination and desire to do his will. We shall find a life of obedience to him, a life of increasing enjoyment of our communion with him. This holy ordinance will be truly the sign and seal, the token and pledge, the instrument and evidence, of our communion with him, and of his communion with us. We shall feed in reality upon his body and blood. We shall gain new strength, and new power of obedience, on every occasion on which we come to his holy table, with a living faith, and in that marriage garment which he hath required in his Holy Scripture, and which he bestows by his Holy Spirit. And thus religiously and devotedly disposed, Jesus Christ will be our food and sustenance in that

holy sacrament,—and the sacrament itself will become to us a divine and comfortable thing, because we thus worthily, or appropriately, and truly, celebrate and partake of it. We shall be able to say with a constantly increasing evidence, “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

X.

THE LORD'S SUPPER, AN EXPRESSION OF THANKSGIVING.

1. WHEN the Saviour instituted this sacrament, as a token of the dependence of his people upon himself, he made it an occasion of thanksgiving. He took the bread, and blessed, and gave thanks. Likewise also, after supper, he took the cup, and gave thanks. It was to himself an occasion of thanksgiving. He was now finishing the work which had been given him to do. The only subject which is spoken of as the subject of the Saviour's thanks, is the actual redemption of guilty man, by his own sufferings and death. It was in contemplating this great result, at a previous period of his earthly ministry, (St. Luke, x. 21,) that "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said,

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes ; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." It was in reference to the same result, that the apostle said of him, (Heb. xii. 2,) "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is in reference to the same result, that the prophet says of him, (Isaiah, liii. 11,) "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied ; by the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many." In contemplating this glorious result, when he should draw men unto himself, by being lifted up from the earth, he gave thanks to the Father, for this gracious plan of man's redemption, on

the occasion of his last supper with his disciples. His death was to be not only a sacrifice, but also a victory. He would spoil the principalities and powers of darkness, and triumph over them, openly on the cross. He would bring many sons to glory, as the captain of their salvation, by perfecting his work of suffering for them. He would provide for them a kingdom, as his Father had provided one for him, that they might see his glory in his kingdom, and be partakers with him on his throne. The holy sacrament which he now instituted, was to commemorate this death for sin, and the glory that should follow. He therefore made it an occasion of his own thanksgiving, and appointed it to be an occasion of thanksgiving for *them*. Thus his church have followed his example. They have done that which he did, in remembrance of him. They have met together, and blessed, and given thanks to God, for these inestimable benefits of redeeming love. They have called the cup, "a cup of blessing." They have

called the ordinance, a feast. They have considered it a feast of thanksgiving, at which they were especially called upon to give thanks to God for his unspeakable gift. They have appropriated the title eucharist, or thanksgiving, to it, as especially indicative of the mind and heart, with which the people of God, bought with such an inestimable price, should assemble to keep the feast, and unite to eat the supper of the Lord. And thus has this sacrament always remained in the church of God. Thus is it considered and represented to us, in the communion office of our own church.

2. This is the subject of the *second exhortation*, in giving notice of the communion. In case the minister shall see the people negligent to come to the holy communion, he is thus to address them. The previous exhortation reminded them of the benefits which were here to be received, and pressed upon them the state of mind and heart which must be acquired, that they might obtain them. This reminds them of the blessings which they have already

received at the Lord's hands, and appeals to their sense of gratitude, to teach them here to express their thanks for these mercies, and begs them to consider how great is the ingratitude which is manifested in their neglect. All the exercises and offerings of religious worship on the part of man, ought to be marked by the spirit of affectionate gratitude to God. We can never come before him, but as the recipients of amazing mercies. And whether we come with a deep sense of sin, to acknowledge our unworthiness, and implore forgiveness, or with a feeling of need, to beg the mercies which he only is able to bestow, in every case the privilege of a permission to come is great. The blessings which have already crowned our lives, from his gracious dispensation, are beyond our power to count or estimate. But this spirit of thanksgiving belongs, in a very peculiar degree, to our worship in this holy sacrament. We commemorate here not only the mercies which have followed us as the creatures of God, showing in every portion, and in

every relation of life, the loving kindness of a faithful Creator, but the special mercies which have been brought to us as sinners. We have been redeemed, not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. He hath himself laid down his life for us. What forbearance has been extended to us! How has the thanksgiving of God endured with us, as vessels of wrath fitting ourselves to destruction! How has God multiplied the means and opportunities of salvation, around the most careless and ungrateful of mankind! How graciously and freely has he opened to us the way of peace with him, and of eternal life! What glorious hopes and privileges have been offered to us in the Gospel, without money, and without price! Salvation, with no conditions to clog our acceptance of it! Redemption in the blood of the Son of God, perfect and complete, to all who will receive it! Communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, a state of actual and ever

lasting participation of his triumphs and his glory, perfected by himself, acknowledged by the Father, ministered by the Holy Ghost! How great and wonderful is such a privilege to the lost and guilty! These are special calls for thanksgiving, which the Gospel makes upon us. Therefore our exhortation says, "Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provisions, so that there lacketh nothing, but the guests to sit down; and yet they who are called, without any cause, most unthankfully refuse to come." O, yes. This is the Gospel in all its fulness. Everything done,—everything ready,—everything attractive. There lacketh nothing, but the guests to sit down. Surely there should be some return. And the ingenuous and affectionate heart cannot but demand, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?"

3. It is here that this exhortation lays before us this holy ordinance, as the *expression*

of our thanksgiving. The psalmist says, "I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord." We must be careful not to call the Lord's Supper literally the cup of salvation. Many doubtless find no salvation there. But it is the token and the witness of our salvation, on the Lord's part. And we must make it the token and witness of our acceptance of this salvation on ours. He sets before us here, an exhibition and recital of what he hath done for our salvation. And we come to tell him, how gratefully and affectionately we reciprocate his tender fidelity, and love him because he hath first loved us. We gather around his table, as those who have had much forgiven, and who love much in return. Our motive in this view, is not to get, but to offer,—not to ask, but to repay. Loaded with benefits; with a thankful remembrance of his death, by which we have attained them all; with a desire never to forget, or to lose the influence of his love; we come to present ourselves, a living sacrifice to him. We desire to

bear the fruits of holiness, of newness of life, which shall be to his praise and glory. With this just and most appropriate argument, the exhortation appeals to a whole congregation of souls who have been all redeemed by the precious blood of a divine Saviour. "I intend by God's grace, to celebrate the Lord's Supper; unto which in God's behalf, I bid you all who are here present, and beseech you for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, that you will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God himself." It puts the case before them, as if they were themselves to be the object of this contempt and rejection. "Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think a great injury and wrong done unto him?" It pleads with them against provoking the withdrawing these mercies from them, by their neglect, and converting the love they despise and refuse, into God's indignation against them. It argues with them on the assumed ground of their vain excuses for such neglect. How wrong

and unfounded are all excuses which are offered against the exercise and action of a grateful spirit towards God. You are asked to be thankful. You are invited to come here and offer the tribute of your thankfulness. And when God thus opens the way of return for sinners to himself, and promises to receive and bless them with the riches of his accepting love, and thus "callesth you, are ye not ashamed to say, ye will not come? When ye should return to God, will ye excuse yourselves, and say, ye are not ready? Consider earnestly with yourselves, how little such feigned excuses will avail before God." All these appeals are founded upon the boundless mercies which men have actually received from the Lord's hands, for which it is presented as a great dishonor, that they have no gratitude to offer to the merciful Giver of them all. But the highest of all mercies, the riches of redeeming love, is particularly recited, as a call for their peculiar praise. "As the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up his soul by death

upon the cross, for your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, as he hath himself commanded; which if ye shall neglect to do, consider with yourselves how great is your ingratitude to God." This is an affecting and appropriate appeal. The heart which truly feels its obligations for the mercies of redemption, cannot refuse to resist it. If the Holy Spirit has taught us our need and guilt, and has opened to us the free and unbounded love of God in Christ Jesus towards us; if he has applied to our hearts the power of his renewing grace, and made us to taste the fulness of his forgiving love;—we shall feel, that it is our highest privilege, to tell him how grateful we really are, and how much we desire to love and serve him. Our hearts will be so truly occupied and interested, in that which we have already received, that the idea of what we are to get, will hardly interpose. It is a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful. And to have any particular token appointed, as the accept-

able method in which we may express the gratitude we truly feel, will be regarded by us as a great and precious blessing. For such a token of gratitude, has the Lord's Supper been established. It declares our thankful remembrance of the Saviour's death, our grateful acknowledgment of the blessings we have received thereby. We love to come, and keep the feast, with this rejoicing spirit. We love to meet around the Lord's Table, as the union of a happy family in Christ. We are thus reminded, and we there remind him, of what he hath already done for us, whereof we are glad. We utter our songs of praise. We offer our sacrifice of thanksgiving. We keep our happy Eucharist. Enlarging gratitude is increasing delight. We are more and more happy in him. We rejoice to say, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ."

XI.

SELF-EXAMINATION CONNECTED WITH THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. THE subject here presented for our consideration is of the most vital *importance*. It is brought before us in the first exhortation which is read "at the time of the celebration of the communion." The two previous exhortations, which have already been considered, are read upon other Sundays or holidays antecedent, when notice is given of an intended celebration of the Lord's Supper. They describe the nature and design of this holy sacrament, and the purposes of its institution, in the different views which have been already treated by us. They do not form a part of the communion office in itself. The communion office commences with the action of Christian love to

which our attention has been directed. And then proceeds in its first reference to our own character and state, as participants in the sacred rite, in the exhortation now before us. The subject of this exhortation is self-examination, considered in the character which is to distinguish it, and the purposes for which it is to be undertaken. "Dearly beloved in the Lord, ye who mind to come to the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Judge, therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord." "Examine themselves! Let a man examine himself!" The idea of *examination* is entirely simple, and needs no explanation. The habit and illustration of it occur in all the departments of our daily life. It implies the formation of a distinct purpose for which we examine,—time, patience, perseverance devoted to the occupation, and employed in attaining

the result. It is not a mere transitory glance at an object. It is a planned effort for its thorough investigation and understanding. Here the object is *self*. "Examine your own selves. Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves?" are some of the apostle's exhortations on this subject. It is an inward religious investigation of our own heart and character, as they stand related to the will of God. And though the importance of the work is not confined to any ordinance of religion, or to be regarded ever simply as a connection with religious ordinances at all, here it is particularly brought forward in relation to the Supper of the Lord. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

2. The *immediate end* to be attained in thus diligently trying and examining ourselves, is self-condemnation, not self-satisfaction. It is that we may "judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord." To be judged of the Lord so as to be approved by him, is far from

being a result to be feared or avoided. It is judgment for condemnation that we are to desire to avoid. And it is therefore judgment for condemnation that we are to exercise upon ourselves. In such an examination,—in every diligent and faithful examination of ourselves, the necessary result is a discovery of our sin. This is the thing that we see; the only thing that we shall see; varied and aggravated sin. To understand our errors, to perceive our needs, to feel our unworthiness, to be made more humble under a deeper sense of guilt, is the design of self-examination. In this general view, we shall find accumulated guilt in the memory of our life past. Innumerable transgressions have marked our lives. We cannot tell how oft we have offended. These actual sins are past and cannot be recalled. They may be forgiven, their connection with punishment may be cut off, but their real guilt, their desert of condemnation must remain. And we cannot take a just view of life without the perception of this extreme and accumulated

guilt. We shall find also remarkable tendency to sin, susceptibility to temptation. This will not be in any case to every sin alike. It will be mostly to particular and individual habits of transgression, called our "easily-besetting sins." Each person will find some peculiar temptation individually powerful, and some peculiar habit distinctly marked in the acts of life. When that temptation is presented, the heart feels its fatal influence, and becomes conscious of the necessity of special resistance. But this selected tendency arises out of the general corrupt and unholy state of the heart, which will be seen and felt as the real and habitual state that we discover in ourselves. Not only guilty in the past, but sinful in all the tendencies of the present and the future. And even when actual temptation is refused, and the sin to which it leads is resisted, our sinful character is displayed in the injury which we receive from the contest. The imagination, the memory, the habit of mind, all feel the influence of the corrupting power that temptation

exercises over our fallen nature. The recollection of it occurs with distress. It has left a stain from its contact, a wound inflicted in the conflict, which, though the Spirit of God may have conquered, shows the infirm and sinful nature of ourselves,—a nature which cannot be trusted, and in which there is no good thing. We shall find lamentable indifference to sin, an indifference over which we shall be compelled to mourn, as one of the worst aspects of sin itself. If sin be not loved, how little is it hated or abhorred! How cold becomes the hostility to it, and how feeble are the struggles and warfare against it! How far are we from that intense concern about it which ought to awaken every feeling of interest and effort in opposition and sorrow. We shall find great weakness in all holy efforts for obedience to God. Our struggles against the constantly pressing evil are all feeble, and our purposes and resolutions for newness of life but weakly carried out. We shall find painful unbelief of the divine promises and word, most ungrateful

neglect of a Divine Saviour, constant resistance of the Holy Spirit, as the distinguishing characteristics of our life within. We shall see but little apparent improvement in personal character. Though we may have gained many victories, so manifest and open are the evidences and marks of sin, still more deeply imbedded in our hearts, as we press forward in our life, and in our examination of life, that sin alone, our real, abiding characteristic, will be brought out to our view. This is a very partial and imperfect view of the result of self-examination, in the object which it will spread before us. Yet there is but this one object to be seen; and this view of it is all for which we now have room.

3. The *feeling* with which such an examination must be made, will result in entire condemnation of ourselves. We must look at this corrupt and sinful state, with candor and honesty,—not desiring or attempting to conceal, or cover, or excuse the iniquity of our hearts. We must faithfully bring up the whole array

of our motives and affections, and acts of mind, under a distinct and impartial review. We must look at the whole sinful life and character which we see, with a sincere sorrow, an unfeigned and increasing grief. When we contrast our own course and state of mind with God's requirements, and with the obligations which his mercies lay upon us, we cannot but acknowledge our transgressions with shame and sorrow. We must pursue this view, with an increased abhorrence of sin. Not looking upon transgression, either in memory, or in temptation, with toleration, far less with pleasure,—but with absolute and increasing hatred. How exceeding sinful ought sin to appear to us, as opposed to God, as destructive of our own happiness, as degrading to the dignity and privilege of our own nature, and as in itself ruinous to the souls whom God hath made, and to the government over them which he claims. We must maintain the most earnest anxiety and determination to escape from the control and power of this evil. Whatever

have been our unworthiness, or our falls ; however short we have come of every duty ; however involved in multiplied rebellions, our purpose must still be fixed, to fly from every sin,—to maintain the contest with every enemy, and to advance in every effort of obedience to God. We must realize the deep conviction, that our own obedience can never render us acceptable to God. We are to fly from ourselves in complete renunciation, crying from our inmost spirit, “we know that in us, there dwelleth no good thing.” We must cultivate an increasing feeling of our need of divine aid, and an increasing desire for the power of the Holy Spirit to abide within us,—to renew us after the image and will of God. Thus will every effort of self-examination result in a deeper feeling of our own debasement,—and in a more earnest desire to be delivered from the burden and the bondage of our guilt. We shall be made to feel and to find, that we are nothing, and have nothing, but sin. Not a single trace of excellence or purity of heart,

will examination of self bring out to view. If it leads us to a right result it will be to abhor ourselves, and repent in sincere humiliation before God. This is the simple purpose of self-examination, not to see how good, but how evil we are. It is the discovery of our sin; to bring out to view our own defects and need, and to enable us to see, how utterly and in everything, we come short of all that God has commanded. This will produce self-condemnation. Instead of excusing, we shall utterly condemn ourselves, and feel and acknowledge, that in the sight of God, we can never be justified. Not a single act of life, will a faithful, impartial examination of ourselves display before us, which is not guilty, and which does not appear guilty in our view. This will produce total self-renunciation before God. We shall have no hope in anything of our own. Neither our past acts, nor our present state of mind, nor our prospective improvements, will present themselves as in the least degree a foundation for hope, or a source of consola-

tion. Upon this subject, we are in no danger of feeling too strongly. If we are to arrive at such a judgment of our own character, as will accord with the judgment of God, and take the place of his judgment, our self-condemnation will be most searching and entire.

4. How eminently *Scriptural* and *evangelical* is the guidance of our church upon this subject! Everywhere in the instruction which we receive from this church, this broad and deep foundation is laid for man's salvation, in man's complete and conscious ruin in sin. Sin is declared to be original and inherited in the nature of every man. It is a fault and corruption, by which every man has left all trace of original righteousness far away from him; by which every man is of his own nature always inclined to evil; and which in every person born into this world, deserveth God's wrath and damnation. This is the instruction of our 9th article. This is man's condition when a Saviour comes to him. This is the only condition of man, which self-examination can truly bring

out to view. This guilty and condemned man is accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith; and never for his own works or deservings. Here his fellowship with Christ begins. There is no work of grace in the re-edification of the soul, till the Holy Spirit has dug down with us to this foundation. Here the first stone is to be laid, in total self-rejection, and uncompromising self-condemnation. There, in a consciousness and acknowledgment of our spiritual poverty, the first entrance of our mendicant souls into partnership with Christ takes place. Nor shall we ever fly to Jesus, until we are made to feel, that there is none other to whom we can go. Here also, in that sacrament which is the token of our dependence on Christ, the foundation of our spiritual preparation is to be laid. The church, therefore, addresses us in the language of our communion office, with this kind of exhortation. This subject is first presented in the previous exhortations, giving notice of

the communion. After stating the importance of a proper spiritual preparation of heart, to obtain the spiritual blessing, we are told, "The way and means thereto, is first, to examine your lives and conversations, by the rule of God's commandments; and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if you shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbors, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them,—being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any others, and being likewise ready to forgive others who have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand." And then again, at the time of celebration of the holy communion, the earnest address is made to us, in immediate connection with this sacrament. Be

kind, tender, forbearing with others. Be severe, impartial, thorough, with yourselves. This is a feast of love. Let love be without dissimulation, and never fail in its exercise among you. This is to be the solemn pledge of your entire dependence upon an atoning Saviour. Brethren, judge yourselves, just as the Lord judges you. Diligently try yourselves, as at his tribunal. Examine yourselves by the standard of his perfectly holy commands and will. Abhor and renounce all that is your own, and fly naked and helpless to him who only can help, and who has promised you he will abundantly help all who rest on him. Thus, as the result of such solemn and faithful dealing with yourselves, you will find the "benefit to be great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith, you receive this holy sacrament." They who abase themselves, shall be exalted by the pardoning Lord of all. They who in conscious emptiness go to him, "to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food," which he hath

provided for the poor and guilty who believe in him, shall be made able to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

XII.

PREPARATION OF HEART FOR APPROPRIATE UNION IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. OUR church lays down *one scheme* of spiritual preparation for all the public tokens of a religious life, which, according to the will of God, are observed among us. This scheme is exhibited in our Prayer Book, in different forms, and on different occasions. It involves three separate aspects of character and experience, and what we may call three different, but united aspects of the operation of the Holy Spirit. They are repentance, faith, and new obedience. They are the deep conviction of past guilt, with godly sorrow for sin, the peaceful present trust of the soul in Christ, and the affectionate determination of the heart to follow and obey him. To throw them into the

language of profession, they lead us to say, "I am a lost sinner in myself. I am a saved sinner in my Redeemer. I mean to be an obedient servant to Christ hereafter forever." There are various expressions in which this general view is given in our Prayer Book. The catechism says, "there is required of persons to be baptized, repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God, made to them in that sacrament." There "is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper, to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men." The preparation of mind and heart for both these sacraments, is declared to be also required for confirmation, which is interposed between them, in the rubric after the office for adult baptism. "It is expedient that every person thus baptized, should be

confirmed by the bishop as soon after his baptism as conveniently may be, that so he may be admitted to the holy communion." The exhortation read at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, repeats the same instruction: "Repent ye truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; and above all things, ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world, by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ." In the subsequent address "to those who come to receive the holy communion," the priest shall say—"Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith." All these various instructions and exhortations unite together in the one scheme of spiritual preparation

of which we have spoken. This, in its different parts, we will separately consider.

2. We may well remark, in the outset, that in all religious acts, or acts of worship, we make *the same profession*. And this profession includes these three parts. It can include no more indeed, but as coming separately under one or the other of these. Every act of worship is a profession of our religious feelings, purpose, and character. And whether we engage in prayer in our closets, or in our families, or in the church; whether we come to baptism, confirmation, or the Lord's supper; we come in all under the same character, and with the same profession. We cannot come to God acceptably in any other character. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. To be prepared to seek the Lord acceptably in any one act of worship, is to be prepared to seek him with equal acceptance in every other. And to be unprepared for any, is to be truly unprepared for all. We ought never to con-

sider one method of approach to God more sacred or holy than any other. He is always the same, and everywhere the same. Our relations to him are everywhere the same. To exalt one act of religious worship towards him into a position of peculiar sanctity, is but to dishonor him; as if his character, and the glory and majesty of his presence, were merely temporary and occasional things. In dealing with our fellow-men, much of the claims and exercise of reverence depends upon transitory circumstances and temporary positions. But there can be no such changes in our relations to God. He looketh not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart. He cannot be deceived or mocked with any mere display. Whenever we come to him in any way, we are dealing with the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and who will always be had in reverence by those who are round about him. The Saviour has selected our own private prayers as the peculiar approach of our souls to God. And when

we enter into our closet, it is especially to meet our Father in secret. Nothing can be more really grand, solemn, and impressive than this, in the condition of man. As Moses went up into the cloud, to be alone with God, do we go into our secret place to meet him also. Surely we ought to approach him with the deepest reverence, and think of him as searching our hearts, and setting all our secret sins in the light of his countenance. We can never deal with the King of heaven and earth under circumstances more solemn or more impressive. And no outward or public act of worship can be in its own nature more holy or more sacred than this. With an acceptable character, and in an accepted way, we may always come before God with equal confidence and hope. Without such preparation of heart, our service must be always empty and always rejected. If we are ready in mind and heart, therefore, to pray acceptably alone, we are also ready in mind and heart to assume the public tokens of our dedication, our acknowledgment,

and our spiritual dependence on our Lord and Saviour. The profession of mind and feeling which we make is everywhere the same.

3. It is most important for us to consider the *nature* of this profession, to decide whether we can make it in any form with truth. This is a question of vital consequence for us to decide. If we are called upon to say by any of our acts that which we do not really feel, we cannot do it but with hypocrisy and falsehood. If we are called upon to profess in any such relation, or in any religious ordinance, that we are without sin, we cannot do it in truth. If we are required to say that we are better than others in our views of our own character, it would be impossible to say so if the Holy Spirit has ever taught us the real guiltiness of our own hearts and nature. If we really feel that we are better than others, we as yet know nothing of ourselves as we ought to know. A really Christian mind says with the apostle, "sinners, of whom I am chief." And we can make no acceptable profession of our mind and

feeling to the contrary of this. If it be demanded of us, to declare that we are better than we once were, that our own hearts and characters seem to us more really holy, or that we think God so regards us, we could never justly assent. Every examination of self only brings out for us deeper views of inward guilt. The longer we live in the Lord's service, the more completely unworthy we appear to ourselves. The more we know of his commandments and his love, the more completely we abhor ourselves in his presence. We see no improvement in our natures. We are the more entirely cast upon his boundless grace. Under none of these aspects can we truly come, and under none of them does the Saviour invite us to come. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to call sinners to repentance. He is the physician of the sick, the ransom of those who are under condemnation.

The conviction and consciousness of this character in ourselves is our first profession. "I am

a sinner lost,—deeply guilty in my whole life before God,—deeply polluted in my heart and nature in his sight,—justly condemned and rejected by him,—especially guilty in my unbelief, in my rejection of a Saviour's love, in my satisfaction with my unconverted and worldly state. This I feel. The burden of this guilt I cannot bear. I would mourn for sin with godly sorrow. I would renounce myself, and all hope in self, completely and forever. With true repentance would I forsake my sin and live for God." This illustration might be much amplified. But this is enough. Now this we must *feel*. Of this we must be truly, inwardly conscious. It is the work of the Holy Spirit which produces this feeling. But the feeling is ours. It is impossible to come acceptably to God without it. We may not be able ourselves to express it in these distinct terms. But we really feel so, and when such a state is thus described, we are instantly conscious that it is ours. It becomes more and more truly so. And if we are called upon to make this avowal, we can do it with

sincerity, in our closets, or in the sanctuary or in any of the ordinances of the Lord's house.

4. But we are not left as sinners lost. We have been *redeemed*, with the precious blood of God's dear Son, who has become a propitiation for our sins, and whose blood cleanseth us from all sin. He has revealed and taught this great fact to us in his Holy Gospel. It is the glad tidings of great joy which we have heard from the word of God. We have received it. We have embraced it. We fully believe it. We are truly thankful to know this wonderful mercy of our Saviour Christ which led him thus to "humble himself even to the death upon the cross, for us miserable sinners who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life." In simple faith in the truth of this divine statement, we trust ourselves to that which he hath done for us. We are called by him under this character, as those whom he hath bought with

a price. We may, therefore, cheerfully make this our second profession, "I am a *saved* sinner. God hath redeemed me according to his mercy. He hath laid mine iniquities on his Son. He hath made him to be sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in him. He hath imputed his righteousness to me. I am justified in him. I am no longer lost in fact, though lost in myself. I am no more condemned, though I am so guilty. He hath blotted out my transgressions as a cloud. He hath become my peace, and the consolation and the hope of my soul. I shall not die, but live and speak the praises of my God." This we believe, upon the certain truth of the divine testimony. God hath so declared, and it is impossible that he should deceive us. God, who cannot lie, hath said so,—and our hearts are satisfied with it and rejoice,—

Nor fear with his righteousness on
Our persons or offerings to bring.

We cannot say we *feel* these statements to be

true. They are subjects of faith, not of feeling. We *believe* them to be true. We feel our guilt. We believe our redemption. We feel our unworthiness. We believe our pardon. We feel happy and thankful that it is true. But it is not true because we feel thankful and happy. Its truth depends upon the certainty of the word of God. On that we rest. We cannot come in any form acceptably to God, but with this faith. Vain is every prayer without it. We must profess it in our closets or we are not heard. That God is our Father, and will meet us there as his children, is the very foundation of our closet worship. If we can truly say so there, we may as truly say so everywhere. If we have this precious faith, we may come in any ordinance, accepted of the Lord of all. But without faith it is impossible to please him. Unless we do thus believe, how can we approach him at all, or hope to find any ordinance, or service, a blessing to us?

5. As sinners lost, and as sinners saved, we

are now ready to be servants *obedient*. The same Spirit who has made us to feel our guilt, and enabled us to believe the record which God has given us of his Son, has imparted to us a desire and a purpose to serve the Gracious Lord who hath bought us for himself. We now see on our own side, unmingled poverty ; on the side of Christ unfailing wealth. On our side a poor mendicant asking for mercy. On his side a bountiful benefactor giving us of his fulness, double for all our sins. We long to bring these two so perfectly adapted, together ; to cast our poverty at the Saviour's feet, and to be enriched only by the communications of his fulness and grace. We desire to transfer ourselves to him, to give up our sinful souls to his disposal, and our unworthy lives to his service. This is a conscious wish of our hearts ;—a wish in reference to which we cannot be mistaken, and of the sincerity of which we have no doubt. To live as the followers and servants of the Son of God who hath thus come to seek and to save us, is the earnest desire,

and the fixed purpose of our hearts. We do affectionately and truly choose, and desire to have, his favor as our portion, and his service as our occupation forever. This leads us to prayer, and to all the ordinances of the Gospel. We thus freely and thankfully give ourselves up to Christ, to have our fellowship with him, and to belong to him as his property for time and for eternity. With this real and affectionate determination and desire, we may make our third profession. "As a sinner ransomed by a Saviour's blood, I here freely yield myself a living sacrifice to him. I truly wish to belong to him, to be like him, and to be with him. It is the real purpose of my heart to serve him, according to his will, in any condition in which he shall place me. I have nothing but guilt to offer him. I am full of infirmities in my efforts to do good. But I plead his worth, and I rely upon his strength. I can do nothing that shall be worthy of his acceptance. But I long to serve him to the utmost of my power; to be made holy as he is holy;

and to be fruitful and useful to his glory. This is the real choice, purpose, and final decision of my heart." When we thus utter the real feelings and views which the Holy Spirit has given to us, we come before God in a way which he hath opened, and which is acceptable in his sight. These three parts make the language of a Christian profession. If they are the utterance of the sincere feeling of our hearts, it is the language of a true profession. But we cannot come to God acceptably in any way, with anything less than this. We cannot under any circumstances, add anything more. In private or in public, alone or with the church, in prayer or in praise, this is the stand we must take; this is the only stand we can take. What then is a Christian, but a conscious sinner, feeling himself lost, seeking salvation in a divine Saviour who is offered to him, and in whom he trusts? What is he to the end of life, but this? The same ground which he takes, when as an awakened penitent, he first comes to a Saviour's feet, he also takes when

as a triumphant believer, he enters into a Saviour's rest. "God be merciful to me a sinner," said old Watts Wilkinson to his daughter in his dying hour, after more than sixty years faithful preaching of the Gospel, "my child, I have never got beyond that prayer." What can he ever say, but what the apostle says, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after; this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching after those things which are before; if that I may apprehend, (truly lay hold of,) that, for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus,"—who hath thus mercifully laid hold of me. This is the profession of our own mind and feelings, which our church requires us to make, and which is the only one we can ever truly make, in all the outward public ordinances of the Gospel. This is the profession which is called for at the Lord's Table,—and to the attainment and exercise of the state of mind which it utters, and which a participation in the sacrament itself utters,

though we said not a word, all the exhortations and instructions of the church, which we have already quoted, simply and directly lead. Without this mind, none ought to be baptized, or confirmed, or unite in the Supper of the Lord. And when we are called upon, in any shape, to make such a profession, the simple question for us to consider, is whether this is the real state of our mind and heart, and we can do it in sincerity and truth.

6. In connection with this desired state of mind, our church reminds us of the danger of *unworthily* receiving the Lord's sacraments. The terms *worthily* and *unworthily*, convey to some minds the idea of merit, or personal excellence. The simple meaning of them, as they are thus used often in our Prayer Book, is suitably or unsuitably, appropriately or inappropriately, with or without a mind, in its character and measure of feeling, adapted to the occasion, to which particular reference is made. When in the collect for Ash-Wednesday, we use the expression, "worthily lamenting our

sins," to imagine it meant meritoriously, would be equally opposed to the whole doctrine of the Gospel and the church. It means suitably, in degree, to their great extent and guiltiness before God. And so, in our communion office, when we read, "As the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith, we receive that holy sacrament, so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily," the contrast is evident;—it is without a true penitent heart and lively faith, unsuitably to its appointed purpose and design. We are never to hide this important fact from our minds. We may engage in religious ordinances most unworthily. We may greatly and wickedly abuse them. We have reason to fear, that men often do so. But let us settle in our minds some very important points in this connection.

First. Unworthiness in receiving, and unworthily receiving, are very different things. Who is worthy, in reference to his own excellence or goodness, to approach God in any

way? In this sense, there is no such thing as worthiness in any man. The Saviour's worth is all our plea. The consciousness and acknowledgment of our utter unworthiness, lies at the very foundation of an acceptable state of mind, as we have already seen. So that the deep feeling that we are unworthy, is essential to our worthily receiving the Lord's blessings. And the feeling that we are worthy of any of them, would be most unworthily, unsuitably, abusively receiving them. The admonition is not directed to those who are unworthy to receive, but to those who do unworthily receive.

Second. Such an admonition or warning is not especially connected with the Lord's Supper, as if it belonged to no other religious act. We have already seen that the same mind is required, and the same profession is to be made, in every religious service or privilege. To engage in any one unworthily, is equally dangerous, and equally certain of condemnation. The prayer of the hypocrite will be an

abomination, as certainly as his sacraments. God will not be mocked. And however we come to him, we are to lift up our hearts with our hands to the heavens, if we expect him not to shut out our prayer. With equal truth may we say of our closet supplications, or of our public worship, "The benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart, and lively faith, we come. So is the danger great, if we come unworthily." The very preaching of salvation in Christ, which is the life of the believing soul, is "a savor of death unto death, in those that perish." We had better never have had the privileges and mercies of the Gospel, than to reject or abuse them, when so graciously bestowed. "On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Third. It is most important to remember, that the refusal of the privileges of the Gospel, is treating them just as unworthily as the wrong participation in them. Because the hypocrite's prayer is rejected, we do not gain freedom from such rejection, by refusing to

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pray. Because an abused Gospel is heavier condemnation, we do not escape this condemnation, by refusing the Gospel. We cannot put ourselves back, upon the lower stand of responsibility of those, who have never had the opportunity to hear. The very crime of the Jews, was the rejection of the Saviour. This is the heaviest crime and danger of man. If the Lord has come, and we have refused,—if he has stretched out his hands, and we have not regarded it, our refusal to hear, puts him to an open shame, and crucifies him afresh. We cannot treat him with more indignity than that. This was the very crime of the man who hid his single talent in the earth, lest he should be condemned for the wrong use of it, but whose condemnation for this was, to be cast into outer darkness, where was weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is equally true of the Lord's table. The refusal, the wilful neglect, is a course just as derogatory to the Saviour's claim and right, as the perverse abuse. Unworthily rejecting is no less dangerous than

unworthily partaking. Our communion office, therefore, says of this, "If ye shall neglect to do this, consider with yourselves how great is your ingratitude to God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same, when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's table, and separate yourselves from your brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food."

Fourth. This unworthily receiving, is coming without a true penitent heart and lively faith. The apostle calls it "not discerning the Lord's body." Either by indifference or thoughtlessness, not engaging in the spiritual service which the outward form is meant to indicate,—or with an impenitent and unbelieving heart, coming to it as a mere ceremony or form,—or with a superstitious and idolatrous mind, exalting the mere outward rite, as if itself were the instrument of blessing and salvation. Under neither of these abuses is the great purpose of commemorating the Lord's death preserved, or his real body, his actual obedience and death

for man, spiritually discerned. And by each of them, the whole character and nature of the sacrament, as defined by our catechism, is destroyed. Such profanation of this holy ordinance, the apostle says, makes one "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." It places him under the very guilt of rejecting and mocking the Glorious Saviour. It makes him of necessity, therefore, to eat and drink, not the body and blood of Christ for his soul's salvation, but condemnation to himself. His own act condemns him. It acknowledges an authority which, at the same time, he despises; and proclaims a salvation which, at the same time, he rejects. Out of his own mouth will he be condemned. We cannot speak lightly of such an assumed relation to the Saviour as this. He knoweth the hearts of men, and will bring the hidden things of darkness to light before his judgment-seat. The apostle speaks also of some dreadful consequences of this abuse of divine grace and mercy, which have been supposed to refer to temporal judgments

among the Corinthians. "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Perhaps there might have been a reference here to something which was temporary and local. But it is nevertheless equally and permanently true in its spiritual application. A strong, and healthful, and active church, or a weak, and sickly, and sleeping church, will entirely depend upon the faithful and due observance of the Lord's appointments, of which the Lord's Supper is one of so much importance,—or upon the cold, and formal, and unbelieving neglect or abuse of them. Professing Christians may become lukewarm and useless, and be spued out of the Lord's mouth. They may be condemned with the world and rejected by the Judge of all. There is nothing in the outward profession to prevent it. The children of the kingdom may be cast into outer darkness. The remedy for this is only to be found in the pardoning mercy of a Saviour. The way of obtaining and enjoying this remedy, is by the teaching and guidance of the

Holy Spirit,—“judging ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord;” and gaining fidelity and usefulness to Christ, under “the chastening of the Lord,” that we may be accepted of him, and “not condemned with the world.” Thus worthily partaking, though unworthy to partake, we discern the Lord’s body, and gladly embrace it. We show forth the Lord’s death, and declare our whole trust in it. We find the Lord’s appointment to be a divine and comfortable thing to our sinful, but believing souls. We rejoice to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food, his precious body and blood given for us. We come not as dissemblers with God, but in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture. We make a sincere and affectionate profession of our state of mind and heart. We are “received as worthy partakers of that Holy Table.” And we can say with sincere gratitude and delight, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

XIII.

EVIDENCES OF A TRUE PREPARATION OF HEART.

1. No part of our subject can be more important than this. The apostle says, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith." There is a state of the soul which is thus styled, being "in the faith." It is the same as being in Christ. It is to be truly Christians,—new creatures, converted, born of God,—all these expressions, and many others like them, as they are used in the Holy Scriptures, describe that spiritual state of man, in which he has been brought back by the Holy Spirit from his alienation in sin, to a new and affectionate obedience to God,—has accepted in his heart the gracious offers made him in the Gospel,—and is truly living by faith upon the divine

Saviour, and in earnest love for his commands. This change of heart and renewal of nature makes him a new creature. The various titles by which it is called, only indicate the different aspects and relations under which it is viewed, and the different privileges which it confers. This spiritual state is that which the exhortations and instructions of our Prayer Book, already considered, describe. This constitutes that preparation of the heart for profitable union in Christian ordinances, which has also been before us. This makes the reality of that Christian profession which we have also examined, and which is expressed in every outward ordinance of the Gospel. This constitutes the real qualifications, which ought to be found in every one who professes to stand on the Lord's side,—qualifications which the church has a right to ask, and which it is most important for our personal comfort and usefulness to find in ourselves. This the work of the Holy Spirit within us. And while self-examination of our own heart and nature, can

bring out no views, but clearer exhibitions of guilt and spiritual need. An examination of the work of the Holy Spirit on our nature and hearts, must bring out the evidences that he has renewed us in the spirit of our mind, and that we are in the faith. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." The evidences of this new mind and heart, we are now to consider. These are not the evidences which men give to each other. Those are the fruits of the Spirit in the outward conduct of the life. They consist in whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report. By these alone can we judge and know one another. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good. By his fruits he is known. But these outward fruits, are not the evidence to our own hearts. We cannot judge ourselves by them. The work of grace in us is like a transparent painting. They who are on

the outside perceive its beauty, but see none of the operations which produce it. They who are on the inside, see these operations, and know that they do produce such a result of beauty, but that beauty which is the result, they cannot see. Indeed, the more others become convinced by these fruits, that we are really growing in grace, the less do we see of them in ourselves. The very feeling in our own heart, for instance, which bears the fruit of humility for others, is only deep humiliation under the conscious want of it in ourselves. That we have any real humility of spirit, we can never ourselves truly discern. The evidences of which we are now to speak, are another class, which are the subjects of our own inward experience, but which other persons cannot see, and can know only by the fruits which will result from them. Perhaps it is a difficult subject to make perfectly plain. And yet there are certain marks and evidences which may be selected, which are quite distinct and involve no mystery.

2. The first of these evidences which we may consider, is a real *earnestness* in the work of our salvation. Of this, we are entirely conscious. Our desires are perfectly sincere. We make no pretence. We do not wish to impose upon others, or to be deceived ourselves. The work of religion, in all its aspects, is an actual and most important object in our minds. We feel our need,—we know our guilt,—we are anxious for a remedy,—we are determined to embrace it,—we set out truly and earnestly to find it. It is a state of mind and feeling to which we have not been accustomed. We pray now as we never prayed before. We search the Scriptures with an interest and a reality which we never knew before. The worship of God, and the preaching of the truth, have an importance and a power for us, which is altogether new. Our souls are the great subject of our thought and concern. When we lie down, and when we rise up, at home and in the way, the salvation of our souls, in the various relations in which its im-

mense consequence to us is presented, becomes the main subject of our anxiety. Now there is no mystery in this. What we really and earnestly desire and pursue, and wish above all other things to obtain, is a subject of undeniable consciousness to ourselves. And we could not deny this actual state of mind with truth.

3. A second evidence, is a real *conviction* of our guilt. Conviction is a perception and acknowledgment of the fact of our guilt. Any conviction of our guilt in the sight of God, and in reference to his commands, we may consider as the work of the Spirit of God; and in our rejection of it, we do resist the Holy Ghost. But our Saviour teaches us, that when the comforter, the Spirit of truth, should come, he shall convince men of "sin, because they believe not in him." The special, peculiar guiltiness of our life, as we see it under his teaching, is in our neglect of salvation, and our rejection of a Saviour. We feel that we are sinners, not more for what we have done, than

for what we have been. Rebellion against God has marked our whole life. Ingratitude to God has filled our hearts. Forgetfulness of God has characterized our minds. Our secret affections have been withdrawn from him, and full of enmity against him. Our views of this do not depend on what others see, or know, or think of us. They are views of our own hearts, as God sees them, and as we see them. They do not arise from our failure in relative duties to our fellow-men. They spring from our unbelief, and sinfulness towards God. We feel that we are guilty, because our lives have been spent in neglect of God, in rejection of the Saviour, and in resistance of the Spirit. This is a subject of our own consciousness. It is impossible to deny it. It would be very difficult to be deceived about it. And the true expression of our state of mind is, "I am deeply in earnest for my soul's salvation, and I am truly convinced of my great guilt, in having neglected God, and despised the Saviour so long."

4. A third evidence of the work of the

Spirit in us, is a godly *sorrow* for sin. The apostle teaches us, that there is a sorrow of the world which worketh death, and a godly sorrow which produceth repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. They do not differ in the fact that they are sorrow. Perhaps not always that they are sorrow for sin. But sorrow for sin, is the only aspect of sorrow which we are here to consider. In this sorrow, they differ in their *motive*. A worldly sorrow is selfish, and arises from fear. A godly sorrow regards the dishonor to the divine character, and arises from a sense of guilt, in the sight of God. They differ in their *subject*. A worldly sorrow regards sin in its acts and its consequences, and mourns over the effects which it produces. A godly sorrow regards sin in its dominion, in the heart and spirit, though it results in no outward acts, and mourns over its existence and influence there. They differ in their *object*. A worldly sorrow measures sin by its relative influence upon others,—upon our fellow-men, against whom we have offended.

A godly sorrow views the guilt of sin, in its hostility to God, and its offence against him. They differ in their *idea* of sin. A worldly sorrow rests upon moral transgressions, chiefly upon outward and relative transgressions of the law of God, as its idea of sin. A godly sorrow considers ingratitude to God, and rejection of a Saviour in the heart, though the life has been free from outward violations of the law, as the real aspect of sin. They differ in their *feeling* towards sin. A worldly sorrow is anxious about open sin, known sin, injurious sin, but has little concern for the inward consciousness of sin in the heart. A godly sorrow abhors sin within the heart; as much, perhaps often more, than when its particular results have been seen in the conduct. They differ in their *results*. Worldly sorrow leads to watchfulness and caution, in regard to future conduct, to repress the actings of sin. Godly sorrow leads to deep humiliation of the soul before God, and to earnest and determined efforts to obtain and exercise a new heart, and

right spirit in his view. They differ in their *duration*. Worldly sorrow rises from excited fears, and passes away with the fears which have produced it. Godly sorrow never ceases. Though sin be pardoned, and there be no fear of its result in punishment, it still fills the heart on every view of sin, and increases in power and influence, as the heart is formed more averse to sin, and more conformed to God. They differ in their actual *fruits*. A sorrow of the world ends in selfish indifference to God, and worldly disobedience, where it began. A godly sorrow brings the soul to seek a Saviour in persevering devotion, and produces repentance unto salvation. All these points of difference come from the one fact, that they differ in their *origin*. Worldly sorrow springs from selfish interest. Godly sorrow is the fruit and work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. These are very apparent differences, by which the two classes of sorrow may be distinguished. We might with great profit enlarge much more upon each point, and also multiply the points

of difference. These are enough for our present purpose. They bring out sufficiently to view, the real character of a godly sorrow for sin, which we have laid down as our third evidence of a true preparation of heart. They appeal to our own consciousness, and our secret investigation of the work of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts. We cannot easily be deceived, if we faithfully conduct such an examination of the work of God upon our souls.

5. A fourth evidence is the *commencement of a new life*. We have actually begun a repentance unto salvation. Deeply in earnest, convinced of our guilt in relation to our gracious Lord, sorrowing for it, after a godly sort,—we have set out in a new path. This commencement may involve many points for observation, as our relations in life vary. We were prayerless, and we have begun to pray. Our families were prayerless, and we have set up the worship of God in our habitations. We have begun to search the Scriptures with de-

light and profit. We have broken off our individual habits of personal transgression. We have entered with determination upon the duties of a new and Christian life. Our minds, and purposes, and plans of life are new. In whatever relation we stand, we are conscious of occupying it with new feelings and new objects. We desire no longer to live for ourselves; but to be the Lord's servants for the salvation of men. On this new path, we have actually entered. The prodigal son was arrested in his career of sin,—convinced of his unnecessary degradation,—determined to arise and go back. And he arose and went. Here was the beginning of a new course. Could there be any difficulty or any necessary uncertainty in perceiving or asserting the fact? Sinful man is travelling a road entirely wrong. He becomes convinced, determined, and he turns back. His face is now in a new direction, his journey is now for a new end and object. He has been converted. Is there any difficulty or any inevitable uncertainty in de-

ciding this fact, that he has turned actually back? that he has really begun a new life? However infantile and weak may be the present product of this birth, there is life where there was no life. There is love for God where there was no love for God. There is humble trust in the Saviour, and dependence on his Spirit, where there were none before. There is a new motive, and principle, and aspect of conduct. And there are new fruits and results of character. And however weak the new things are, old things have passed away, and these new things are there. We have really, consciously set out in our new journey, begun our new life, entered upon a new service. We feel and know the fact,—perhaps know the very time when we really began,—and others soon perceive and know the fact also, by the fruits and influences which the Spirit enables us to put forth. Why need we hesitate in saying, that in the strength of God we have begun a course which we never began before? We have commenced a repentance which we sure

ly hope is unto salvation, and will never be repented of.

6. A fifth evidence is a real *love for Christ* our Saviour. This is a point which deserves to be well considered, and one at which many of the weak ones of the Saviour's flock feel great difficulty. Love is the subject of our own consciousness. Its perception cannot be made the result of argument in ourselves. We know whom we love, whom we dislike, and who are perfectly indifferent to us. It would be impossible to persuade us to confound these states of mind in our earthly relations. A mother would never think of arguing herself into the conviction that she loved her child, because she fed, and guarded, and thought of him. Her own consciousness settles the point, without the necessity or opportunity for argument. Our love is not altered in the nature of its principle, but only in the methods of its operation, and in the results which it produces, by the object to whom it may be directed. And our love for Christ is just as really the

conscious choice of our own hearts, as our love for any earthly object or friend. The reality of love does not depend upon its constant occupation of the thoughts by its particular object. The most tender mother of an only child may not have that darling object always in her thoughts. Hours of necessary occupation of the mind may pass without its presence there. It depends upon the feeling with which the object is regarded when it does arise. And how instantly is this the subject of our own consciousness! When the Saviour is thought of, or presented, does he appear as an object of indifference, or aversion, or real desire and esteem? The reality of love does not depend upon its apparent degree. How can we ever love any one enough, when the Lord has commanded us to love each other as ourselves, and to love one another as he hath loved us? We can never love the Saviour as we ought to love him. We should not love him as he deserves to be loved, even were our whole hearts to be given to him. Let us remember that the very

desire to love is itself a real evidence of love,—however feeble that love may be. We cannot desire to love one to whom we are wholly indifferent. And in our relations to the Saviour, our love, the more earnest and effectual it becomes, the more it increases and excites our desires to love him more, and the painful consciousness and acknowledgment that we have not yet begun to love him as we ought, or as we desire. When the Lord asked Peter if he loved him, the disciple felt no hesitation in his reply, or in his appeal to the Lord, for the truth of this reply. Yet his love for his Master had been sadly interrupted in its appropriate fruits. And why should we ever feel it necessary to refuse, or to hesitate, to answer a similar question addressed to us? What would be, what must be, the honest and sincere reply of our hearts to such a demand? If we are really turned to Christ, we really love him. Our trust is in his atoning death for our forgiveness. Our hope of salvation is in his everlasting righteousness. Our constant wish is to do his

will. Our earnest desire is to be conformed to his example. Our real delight is in his service. The more we are able to be like him, the happier we are. The sorrow of our hearts is in offending against him. Our unfeigned grief is, that we love him so little, and are so little formed after his likeness. Our efforts, our plans, our prayers, our earnest wishes, all unite in asking, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" and in the simple, unhesitating purpose, thoroughly to do what he commands. All this is the subject of our own consciousness and knowledge of ourselves. Thus the Holy Spirit has formed Christ within our hearts. He dwells there,—not by sight, as do some of our friends, for we do not see him;—not by memory, as do other of our friends, for we have never seen him;—but by faith, because he is revealed to us in his word, as the Saviour whom we need;—and believing in him, as thus revealed, he is the thing that we long for, and the very joy of our hearts. Jesus Christ is in us, and we are not reprobates

And we could come to no other conclusion, nor utter any other testimony, of our real state of mind and heart, with the consciousness of truth.

7. A sixth evidence is the *single purpose* of our hearts to serve Christ, and to cleave to him forever. This is now our present, actual, undeniable choice. What things were gain to us, we freely count but loss for Christ. The whole plan of our life is to obey and serve him, and every other object is to be subordinate and subservient to this. This is our present purpose. We now freely lay our guilty souls at his feet. We yield ourselves up to his commands. We sincerely desire and determine to do his will, and to stand with him and with his people. This is our present, fixed purpose for the residue of life,—forever. It does not involve the question of our actual perseverance. This we have no means whatever to settle, but in the gracious promises of God. It does not assume any power of perseverance for a single day. The power is all the Lord's, and in the

Lord's hands. What is before us, it is impossible to tell, but by his promise. In faith in that promise, we hope; nay, we hardly doubt. But we have no strength of our own. Nor are we asked to take a single step in our own strength. We are simply asked for our present, affectionate, practical choice. God will endue us with his own strength. But in this choice, we are not to hesitate, and we do not hesitate. It is our undoubted choice and purpose to serve and follow him. If life be prolonged, we trust it will be a purpose daily renewed, and daily accomplished,—that as long as we live, we may live unto the Lord. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know that gracious Lord, whose purposes have been fixed, and whose ways have been prepared, from everlasting. He will give us strength according to our day. He will keep us by his own power, through faith unto salvation. Without his grace, we cannot take a single step in the heavenly way. But all this we leave in his hands, nor do we stop to consider or anticipate

it. Behold, here we are, ready to be the Lord's forever. This is the actual, deliberate, unchanging choice of our hearts. And neither the world, nor self, nor sin, whatever temptations or obstacles they present, can affect the question of this actual choice and purpose of our hearts. We could not with conscious truth, aver that we had any other choice, or wish, or purpose, upon this great subject, but this.

8. Here, then, are *six* different and successive evidences of a true preparation of heart, for a religious profession. I am truly in earnest in seeking the salvation of my soul. I am really convinced of my guilt, in neglecting my Saviour so long. I am truly sorry for this ungrateful and sinful course. I have actually begun a new life, in obedience to him. I really love and choose the Saviour as mine. I freely yield myself up to him, to be his servant forever. How perfectly plain and simple are these points for our consideration. There need be no mistake about them. We may examine ourselves by them, whether we be in

the faith. We may thus see, whether the Spirit of God has really wrought a new creation within us. We may thus decide whether "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" and whether we can exchange with our divine Lord, in the midst of his church, the tokens of our sincere devotion to his service, and love for him. In setting out upon such a course of new devotion, why should we doubt? and where should we doubt? To doubt Christ, either in his word or power, is sin,—the sin of unbelief. We are bound to trust him simply, that we may be to his glory, by first trusting in him. To doubt ourselves, is folly. We know that there is no health, and no good thing in us. We are to place no dependence there. All dependence there is ruin. To doubt whether I shall build my house upon the bosom of the sea, is mere folly. I know that it cannot stand, and my labor is given for that which will profit me nothing. To doubt whether a broad and ample rock will hold up my foundation, is equal folly.

And when transferred to Christ, is sin, because an entire trust in him is a fixed command. Why should we doubt? Let us take his word; let us trust his promise; let us rely upon his certain faithfulness. Let us simply believe that he hath redeemed us, pardoned us, accepted us, saved us, glorified us, in the perfect accomplishment of his own work, in our behalf; therefore we have never to agitate the question, "Lord, if thou canst." He has already done it. Only believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. This makes our path in his service, a secure one, a peaceful one, a simple one, a successful one, a happy one, a triumphant one. And in the simplicity of our faith in a Saviour, who has finished the work which was given him to do, and has sent his Spirit to give us access to the Father, through him, we may give him our token, and thankfully and undoubtingly say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

XIV.

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. WE have considered this Holy Sacrament as the token of our dependence on Christ our Saviour. We have also examined at sufficient length, the nature and evidences of that preparation of heart which is indispensable to an appropriate and edifying participation in this holy ordinance. These have indicated the general, habitual character which we ought to possess and cultivate, in connection with this divine institution. But supposing ourselves to find all these blessed evidences of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within us, which we have considered,—then there comes the actual engagement in the ordinance thus appointed, and the worship which is connected with it. Ought there not then, to be a distinct

and actual preparation of our minds and hearts for the purpose of this communion? Our church has settled this point for us, by making it the duty of the minister to give previous notice, on the preceding Sunday, of the purpose to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The design of this notice is to lead Christians, especially to acquire that spiritual preparation of heart, which becomes the actual occasion. This should be made a particular and important object for our attainment in the intermediate season. The whole scheme of self-examination, and spiritual preparation which has been here laid out, under the guidance of the offices of our church, ought to come up on every such occasion for our general consideration. The first exhortation in the communion office says, "it is requisite, that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience." We must approach this ordinance with a cheerfully believing and peaceful mind. And though such a mind may be our real habitual

possession, yet ought we to be stirred up to the special actings and exercise of such a mind, in this particular connection; so that we may always come, not only with a general preparation, but in a really prepared state, at the time at which we do come.

2. We should, therefore, make the nature and purpose of the ordinance, a subject of previous meditation and thought. We should call especially to mind the excellence and glories of the Saviour, in remembrance of whom it was instituted. We should take time and opportunity, to think of the design of his coming, and of the works of grace and love which he has finished in man's behalf;—of our own need of him, and the various blessings which he bestows, and the mercies which he has conferred on us. It is well to give order and shape to our meditations and thoughts, by selecting particular parts of this great subject for our special consideration. The object of all such thought and meditation is, to gain deeper views of our own sinfulness; clearer perceptions

of the work which our Lord has finished; and happier and more distinct appropriations of this work, by faith to ourselves. It is thus, to excite our love, to awaken our confidence, and to draw forth our praise, and gratitude, towards that Gracious Lord who has redeemed us from bondage, to be children to himself. It is to animate our confidence, and to elevate our hopes, so that we may the more really enjoy the privilege of his service, and the blessedness of communion with him. We should also make this an occasion of particular secret prayer, that we may obtain from God, those precious influences of his Holy Spirit, which shall draw us nearer to him, and make our hearts truly ready to approach him, and to rejoice in him. The more we enjoy his presence, the more we shall prize this gift, and feel our great need of it,—and the more we shall realize our great unworthiness to receive it. We shall be led therefore to pray the more earnestly, that we may come to him acceptably, and that he will meet us in peace, and with an abundant bless

ing. Thus shall we be able to come to this holy sacrament with a mind collected, serious, affectionate, intelligent, and without confusion or coldness. It will be a great privilege to come, and to come with a spirit, filial, confiding, happy, and sincere. It would be quite inconsistent with the plan of instruction upon which we have gone in this little work, to lay out particular times, and special appointed exercises of meditation and prayer in this connection. Our whole purpose has been to lead to an union in this worship, with perfect freeness of spirit, and not in the bondage of any prescribed forms. The spirit of true fellowship with Christ will delight always to exercise itself in actual communion with him. But it will also rejoice to improve all the special occasions which are thus presented particularly to call upon his name. It will rejoice not only to have him for its Lord, but also to prepare for him an habitation, that he may come and make his abode in the soul, and dwell with it forever more. Such a spirit will therefore em-

brace the offered opportunity for special meditation and prayer, which a public notice of this sacrament gives, as a privilege of great worth ; and not regard it as a task or duty, which it is required to perform, and which must have its appointed metes and bounds of sufficiency for the purpose, authoritatively laid out.

3. Coming with this prepared and collected mind, bringing the Saviour in our hearts, and with our thoughts and affections especially awakened and drawn to him, we enter upon the solemn and affecting worship which this ordinance presents. We first listen to the special invitation which is given to us; as the table of the Lord is spread before us. We feel conscious, as we listen to its expressions, that "we do truly and earnestly repent us of our sins," that "we are in love and charity with our neighbors," that we do "intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways," and that we really desire to "draw near with" a simple "faith, and take this holy sacrament

to our comfort." No comfort or blessing, in our actual view, seems of equal worth with peaceful fellowship in Christ, and communion of the spirit with him. This state of mind which we have truly sought, and desired to bring to the house of God. And this state of mind God has really bestowed upon us, through his grace; and with it in our possession and enjoyment, we are here by his permission at his holy table. We cannot doubt, therefore, that the invitation which is given is addressed to us, and, with gratitude and gladness, we embrace it, and unite in the solemn language of confession, to which it leads us.

4. How serious and impressive are the terms of this confession of sin! Appealing to the Searcher of hearts and the Judge of men for our sincerity, with what force of expression do we declare our knowledge of our sin, and our sorrow for its guilt! How extensive is the application which we make of this acknowledgment, to thought, word, and deed of our sinful life! How humbly we confess our sense of its

worthiness of divine indignation and wrath against us! With what distinctness do we profess our earnest repentance and self-condemning sorrow, calling God to witness that every memory of our sin is grievous and painful to us, and the burden of its guilt beyond our power to endure. How deeply here are we required to descend in our process of self-renunciation, that we may lay the first stone of our hope upon the mercy of our Gracious God! We plead there as sinners for mercy, mercy! We implore a free forgiveness in the Saviour's merits and death; and entreat for a complete renewal of mind, and spirit, and life, after his image, and for the Father's glory. How could language more appositely or truly express just what a Christian feels? "Nothing, less than nothing, carnal, sold under sin, with a body of death," condemned by every commandment of God,—looking only to Jesus for deliverance and victory! This is his mind; and this is the language of his humble, self-renouncing confession at the table of the Lord. To such a

mind, the succeeding declarations of God's pardoning mercy, and rich and full salvation in the Lord Jesus, are refreshing and animating indeed. We may well "lift up our hearts" and "give thanks to our Lord God," for such needed and abounding grace; and unite with angels and all the company of heaven to praise and magnify the glorious name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, our Redeeming God. This is our profession of faith, our declaration of our own state of mind and heart. Thus we really feel, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost. And where should we find words that would more justly say, exactly what we feel, and ought to feel, on such an occasion, than this language of our communion office?

4. With this truly humbled and thankful heart, we are now ready to unite in that special token of our mutual love with Christ, which he has appointed. We have our actual fellowship with him by his Spirit, and we rejoice in the opportunity of expressing that fellowship in his sacrament. We feel that he has re-

moved the burden of our sin, and given us actual spiritual rest in himself; and we now come to join together, in the manifestation of our thankful remembrance of his death, and of the benefits which we receive thereby. But even now,—exalted as we are by his grace, in his pardoning love,—how careful is our church in leading us to avoid the remotest appearance of self-righteousness, and to cast ourselves wholly upon the unmerited mercies of the Lord. The language which is uttered in our name, and with the utterance of which, our hearts cordially unite, as our own expression, is most clear in its testimony of dependence wholly on Christ. “We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table.” We bring nothing of our own,—we have nothing of our own to bring. But we have the clearest and happiest assurance of the Saviour’s love to us, notwithstanding our guilt.

We know that it is his peculiar delight always to have mercy ; and there we rest our sinful souls,—penitent, self-renouncing, and believing in him. We implore from him the full and everlasting benefits of his redemption. We ask for that simple, discerning faith, which shall now lead us, in this blessed ordinance, to look far through the outward rite, and to feed in love, and confidence, and hope, upon his meritorious work of suffering, and triumphant death for us ; that we may be full partakers of the blessings of this redemption, and, both in our bodies and souls, made clean and washed in the merit of his sacrifice, we may have an everlasting dwelling and fellowship with him. What a commentary is this whole office, upon that article of our faith, “the communion of saints!” We have just before declared our happy union with the glorified church of God, in the offering of unlimited praise to our exalted, holy Lord. We have heard the exhortation to ourselves, “lift up your hearts.” And now we are taught to look upward and for-

ward, above everything earthly, and through everything that is temporal, to that glorious state in which we shall dwell with Christ forever, and be ourselves among the just made perfect, and part of the glorious company of heaven. This is the meaning and purpose of this prayer of presentation. We know that the bread and wine which we are about to eat and drink, are not the flesh and blood of Christ. They are but dead and outward signs. We do not and cannot, therefore, stop in them. They cannot cleanse our bodies or our souls, from a single infirmity or stain. Therefore we pray that we may find something entirely beyond them; and be made able so to eat the flesh and drink the blood of our gracious Lord, in a living trust in his spiritual power to cleanse and save from all sin, that we may be really washed, and nourished, and accepted in him, and by him forever. It is a most true, spiritual, and discriminating testimony of our faith and hope, which we thus convert into the language of appropriate supplication. It com-

pletes the declaration which we are taught to make, of the spirit and state of feeling with which we present ourselves as guests at the table of the Lord, and the expectations and hopes with which we are encouraged, while we thus assemble in his name. It says, "Behold, we are all here present before the Lord." We have come in that "marriage garment, required by God in holy Scripture, to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food" which he has provided for his people, in the flesh and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May he be pleased to make us, by his own Spirit, worthy partakers of his holy table, and feed us truly with the bread which cometh down from heaven, and the meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

5. That which is called the prayer of consecration, then follows. But even this is not to be regarded by us as a private, personal service, in which the priest alone engages. There is no priesthood acknowledged in the Gospel, or in our church, but the priesthood of Christ. This

sacrament is the breaking of bread by the church. "This do *ye* in remembrance of me." With us, the term priest means the same as presbyter, or elder, the appointed minister of the congregation. And in all the public worship of the church, it is but the necessary appointment for decency and order, that the one authorized minister should speak in the name of the many who are assembled. But that which he alone audibly speaks in their name, is their utterance and their expression; and their hearts and minds should unite in all the words which he is appointed to utter for them, as if spoken by themselves. On the occasion of this sacrament, it is the appointment of the church, that a presbyter alone shall be allowed to officiate. But he officiates in all the offerings of united prayer, as the voice of the people; and it is their common prayer, and not his private prayer, which he offers in their name. This prayer of consecration does not differ in this respect from the other united prayers of the church. It is the assembled church, who come

to commemorate their Saviour's death. And when we come together with the multitude of the Lord's people, thus to eat the Lord's Supper, it is our prayer, which asks the divine presence and blessing with us, to lead us to a truly spiritual commemoration of his love, and participation of his precious death and glorious resurrection. We unite in giving all the glory to our Heavenly Father, for the gift of his only Son for us, and for the full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction which was made in his death, for the sins of the whole world. We recite our acknowledgment of his gracious institution of this blessed supper, as a perpetual memory of that precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again. We declare our purpose, according to this appointment of our Lord, now to celebrate and make, with these holy gifts, these consecrated tokens, which for this end we do thus offer to him, the memorial which he commanded us to make ;—having in our remembrance, his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection

and glorious ascension ; and rendering to him most hearty thanks, for the innumerable benefits thus procured for us. We implore his gracious presence with us, that while we partake of these outward elements of bread and wine, he may so sanctify and bless us in this use of them, that we may be made really partakers of that which they are designed to represent, the “most blessed body and blood” of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We earnestly desire his fatherly goodness also, mercifully to accept our offering of praise and thanksgiving,—though most unworthy of his acceptance. We pray him to extend the blessings of the Saviour’s merits and death,—complete remission of sins, and all other benefits of his passion, not only to us, but to his whole church, and to enable us all by faith in the Saviour’s blood, to receive and enjoy them. But as by the gracious ministrations of his Spirit, interesting us in the Saviour’s death and sacrifice, we are not only to live by him, but to live for him, we here offer ourselves, our souls and our bodies,—

renewed by his grace,—supported by his love,—freely pardoned through his mercy, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice to him. We would not only be partakers of his mercy, we would also live in his service, and to his glory. We desire not only for ourselves, grace to follow and obey him, but we would also have his holy name to be honored by the whole multitude of his people, and by every member of his spiritual family. We therefore pray, that all others who shall unite in this Holy Communion, wherever and whoever they may be, may with us be truly partakers of the obedience and death of the divine Saviour, be filled with his grace and heavenly benediction;—that they and we may all unite in one spiritual body in Christ, and mutually and forever dwell together with him. But these are wonderful mercies; inestimable, inconceivable gifts. We cannot rise to the height of asking for such majestic endowments from God, upon sinful creatures like ourselves, without being reminded of the only ground on which we can

be allowed to stand before God. And therefore we come back to our own personal emptiness, and our lowly prostration under the burden of just condemnation in ourselves. We acknowledge that we are not worthy to make any offering to the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, and beg that we may be received and regarded, not in ourselves, but in our Saviour,—not in any merits of our own, but in the atoning merit and pardoning mercy of Christ our Lord, who deserves all our confidence and praise, and to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, as one God, we give all the glory forever. This is our prayer, the prayer of the people, and not the prayer of the priest alone; and therefore it should be offered by us, and engaged in by us, just as any other common prayer of our liturgy. And in all its expressions so appropriate to our feelings and our wants, our minds and hearts should be lifted up in spiritual worship, to our heart-searching God, who has promised his special

and gracious presence with us, whenever we thus gather together in his name.

6. We now personally approach the table of our Lord. It is the place and the manner which he has appointed for our mutual remembrance, and for our meeting together with him. We go to meet a Saviour upon whom we depend, a Master whom we reverence, a Lord whom we delight to obey, a Friend whom we truly love, and who is to be our everlasting and glorious portion. We see him not, yet believing in him, we rejoice. He is present with us in his Spirit, though not visible to our outward eye. He will return for us, we know not how soon, to take us to himself in life eternal, and we shall ever be with the Lord. It is a solemn occasion, for our relations to him are most important, and our reflections upon ourselves are most humiliating. It is an impressive, engaging service, for the interests which it represents, are of overwhelming consequence. It is a grateful, happy occasion, for the blessings which we have received from him, are of

boundless worth. But it is a most simple and affectionate ceremony and observance, and we are to unite in it with entire confidence, and without fear or doubt. It is a token of our love for Christ, and of our thankful dependence on him; and that love and dependence we really feel. Our hearts will be lifted up to him in prayer and praise, while we remember him with joyful lips. Our thoughts will gather around his person and his work, his power and his love, his victories and his promises for us, with sincere delight. With a feeling of calm, holy, happy confidence, we shall go to his table, and make a new offering of ourselves to him, to live henceforth more completely and more really in his service than ever before. Our secret moments will be occupied in expressions of penitence, and love, and prayer. When we listen to the words of the supplication for us, that "the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given and shed for us, may preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life," our hearts will rejoice to unite

in the prayer, that it may be really so. What blessing can be of worth compared to this! When we hear the direction to "take, and eat, and drink, in remembrance that Christ died for us, and that his blood was shed for us, and to feed on him in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving," we shall realize that this is the very purpose and employment for which we are here. How true and appropriate are these expressions, which are thus particularly uttered in relation to ourselves! The body and blood of Christ are absent things, finished works, heavenly offerings, pleading before the throne of God their worth for us. And the prayer is, that these glorious, gracious provisions of love and merit in a triumphant Saviour, may be personally and permanently applied to us, and accepted in our behalf, to keep us both in body and soul unto life eternal. That which is here, is mere commemorative bread and wine, to be received, and eaten, and drank, as the token and pledge of our remembrance of Christ, of our acceptance of this gra-

cious work of the Saviour, and of our dependence upon it. And even then, how cautiously does our church remind us at this very point, that we must not stop even in a form like this; we must go beyond the mere outward rite; for the real feeding upon Christ is not with the mouth of the perishing body, but by the action of a believing and thankful heart. It would be impossible to arrange language more accurately true, or more anxiously watchful, upon this important and interesting subject. Beautifully expressive and thoroughly scriptural are the principles and sentiments which are here uttered. Let us try to enter into the complete and spiritual purpose of the occasion, as here laid down. Avoid all superstitious devotions to form,—all encouragements of a merely formal spirit. The minister delivers the bread. Take it reverently and eat it. But with no crossing of the hands, to have it laid passively in the palm,—with no bowing down of the head, in a vain gazing at a crumb of bread,—with no expression of homage towards a

mere dead sign. "Lift up your hearts unto the Lord." Let your worship be rational, spiritual, affectionate, truly humble, and devout. But let it be a worship of Christ unseen, and not a worship of mere signs and tokens of a Saviour, which are thus made, often worse than worthless, occasions and instruments of sinful idolatry. Let all things be done on such an occasion reverently, decently, and as becometh godliness and truth. Thus will you go from the Lord's table encouraged, animated, and strengthened by his presence and Spirit, and feel the more devoted to his glory and the happier in his service, by having met and found your Saviour there. Expect not, however, any unreasonable or peculiar excitement or elevation. Fix not your hopes upon any sensible animal exhilarations. In all such views, if you are truly spiritual in your mind, you would be disappointed. If you really found them, it would be to no permanent or sanctifying advantage to your souls. In the cultivation of an affectionate trust in your

Lord, and a sincere devotion to his service, active for his glory, and happy in being employed by him, you will find a far happier growth in grace, and a renewal of a spiritual mind, by his own Spirit, every day. Your meeting him here at his table, will be a real, constant, and true experience; and the means of increasing in you, the spirit and the habit of watchfulness, holiness, and love,—of prayer, and praise, and hope, in the whole current of your life.

7. Beside your own participation in the sacrament, there is of necessity, a period in which you wait for others. It may be well occupied, in selected meditations upon the word of God, and in reading portions of that sacred Word, for instruction and thought; in prayer for yourselves, and intercession for your friends; in an increasing interest in supplications for the church, and for every member of the family of God; in conceiving acts and efforts of usefulness to men, and gratitude to Christ in succeeding life; and in renewed offerings

of devotion of yourselves to his holy and everlasting service. Every moment which you pass at the festival of an earthly friend, is not passed in actually eating and drinking. There is much said and thought besides, to excite the feelings of mutual affection, and to strengthen the bonds of earthly friendship. You hear and you say much that may be both edifying and agreeable, which the circumstances of the occasion excite. So let it be, in coming to the supper of the Lord. In all the communications with him, which become your spiritual relations, your real fellowship with him, let your time be occupied. You have happy moments of retirement, and happy moments of the most precious social intercourse, here united together. Do not fail to improve them. By all means avoid the temptation to leave the church, before the whole service is concluded. This is a frequent act of careless and unthinking indecorum, which we are compelled to witness to our sorrow. "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" Is this the way an

earthly friend is treated? Why should you love to hurry from the Saviour's house, and refuse your part of the offering of thanksgiving and praise, with which the worship of this happy occasion ends? We all unite in a prayer of thankfulness, that God has been graciously pleased to feed us with the spiritual food of a Saviour's most precious body and blood,—that he assures us thus of his everlasting love for us, and our everlasting union with him. We implore his grace to go with us, in our future contests with the cares of earth, and our succeeding efforts to do his will in every holy duty of life. We combine in a song of praise and glory to his holy, heavenly name. And we feel more than ever thankful for his mercies, and determined to obey and follow him forever. Never break off from your part of this closing offering. It is a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful. Thus will the peace and blessing of God truly follow you, and abide with you. You will find it good to have been there. You will go on your way re-

joicing. Your whole spirit, and soul, and body being thus dedicated to the Lord whom you love, you will be able to say in grateful consciousness and enjoyment of heart, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "Truly my fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

XV.

CHARACTER BECOMING PROFESSED FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

1. THIS is a point which requires not explanation, so much as exhortation. We have in these holy sacraments dedicated ourselves to the Lord,—acknowledged him to be our Lord,—and avowed our entire dependence on him for spiritual support and strength,—for spiritual life itself. What manner of persons ought we to be then, in all holy conversation and godliness? Our whole life must be a comment on our profession. At home and abroad, we must carry out the influence of Christian fidelity and usefulness, in every relation in which we are placed by the good providence of God. As parents and children, as husbands and wives, as masters and servants,

we are to govern our various relations, and the duties of those relations, by a constant desire and effort to maintain the direct influence of the Gospel upon all with whom we are connected. Our manifest personal example is to be the chief instrument of our influence in every position in life. We are living epistles, and shall surely be read and known by all with whom we associate. They will see in us an honoring of our Lord by a conversation becoming his Gospel,—or a wounding of him afresh in the house of his friends. Few Christians are called to very public, or official ministrations. The trials of most are in the habitual, private walks of life, and amidst the duties and cares of domestic scenes and occupations. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. Our station is appointed by the wisdom and goodness of God. In his sight there is no little or great in the affairs of men. The highest are as nothing before him. We are never to consider any of our duties as unimportant, or any of our rela-

tions as beneath our most serious notice and remembrance. We must carry the fear of God, and the love of Christ, into every part and influence of our daily life. We must walk watchfully and holily in our most secret relations and engagements. "He that despises small things shall fall by little and little." Our great concern must be, to carry out the constant influence of true religion, and to do everything as unto the Lord. In this way only can we either maintain our own comfort in a Christian life, or honor our divine Master who has called us to his service, or become instruments of adding others to his flock, and saving the souls we love. We are pledged in the sacraments of the Gospel, to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, and we must ever try to return from these sacraments, to the common duties and labors of our life with such evident holiness of character and purpose, that men shall be led to glorify God whose grace is thus displayed in us. A single Christian in a household, is a divine agent and mes-

senger there. To whom, or to how many, he may be made the messenger of salvation, is concealed from him. But everything depends upon the manifest reality of his religion, the undoubted integrity of his motives, and the habitual influence of the holiness of his character, as it is seen in his daily walk in life. If he honors God, God will honor him. If he manifests the mind of Christ, Christ will acknowledge him as his servant, and prosper him in his appointed work. And it must be our constant effort, to maintain the influence of watchful and habitual holiness, or conformity to the example of Christ, in all our stations and connections, if we would adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

2. The habits of personal, private religious worship, are indispensable to our maintenance of a Christian character. If we are truly in Christ, our fellowship with him will lead to a delight in actual conference with him. To enter into our closets to pray, will not appear to us a task to be accomplished, but a privilege

of the most unspeakable value and importance. We shall love to be alone with the Saviour. We shall rejoice in the permission to pour out our hearts before him, and to tell him of all our griefs and needs. To read his mind in his word, and to study his will in his constant government over us, will be an occupation full of pleasure and advantage. The Christian becomes a man of habitual prayer. The infirmities of his nature oppose; the obliquities of his will resist; the unsanctified state of his heart impedes, in the effort to carry out his habit of prayer. But to none of these does he willingly yield. He finds it good for him to draw near to God. And in contest with all the influences which may combine to harass and distress him, in coming to him who heareth prayer, he still persists in fulfilling the real desire of his new heart, and waits upon God to renew his strength. This constant habit of prayer, is an essential evidence of actual fellowship with Christ, and an indispensable means of maintaining it. So much does the whole of life be-

come connected with it, that it is hardly possible to make the habit of prayer a secret from others. Whether we are habitual in this, our whole course of life will display. Every relation and duty will be affected by it, or show the want of it. And no one who does not watchfully maintain it, can either thrive, or shine, as a follower of the Son of God. To this constant action and exercise of our real fellowship with Christ, his Holy Spirit will lead us, and his holy sacraments pledge and bind us. Let us ever be watchful over this, and strengthen the things which remain, when they are ready to die. Never yield to an indolent or lethargic spirit, in your habit of private prayer. The indulgence of such a spirit grows with rapidly-increasing strength, and binds the heart in complete dominion, before the extent of the evil is adequately considered. All your public acts of religion, and exercises of worship, will be vain and useless, unless carried out in the habitual worship of your heart at home. "Will the hypocrite call always upon

God?" This is the test of sincerity and real religion. The heart that really loves him, will. The affectionate spirit of adoption in his children, will. The mind that was in Christ, will. They who are led by the Spirit of God, will. And in this constant exercise of a filial spirit, as in the advancing holiness of their whole life, their path will be like the shining light, which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day.

3. A watchful course of life, in regard to conformity to this world, eminently becomes those whose fellowship is with Christ. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," is the divine command to those who profess to be his servants. "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," is the promise and assurance which he has founded upon their obedience to this command. This subject brings up that which is a constant source of trial to the Christian. Trial of mind in determining in each particular crisis, what his duty really demands; and trial of fidelity,

in boldly fulfilling that which his conscientious view of duty prescribes. Amidst outward earthly opportunities of indulgence, the course of the disciple is extremely beset with the snares of worldly pleasure. The influence of surrounding society, and the sinful examples of many mere formalists in a religious profession, operate unceasingly to lead him astray from Christ, and to make him wound his own conscience, and dishonor the service of his gracious Master. But in this, he must be steadfast. You cannot walk according to the course of this world, and maintain your fellowship with Christ. You cannot be a partaker of the things which please ungodly men, and have your portion in the things which are above. The sacraments of religious fellowship, and the frivolities of a gay and self-indulgent life, are wholly inconsistent with each other,—nay, incompatible with each other. To assume the tokens of acknowledged dedication to Christ, and avowed spiritual dependence on Christ, and then to unite in the tokens of devotion to

the world, and to the god of this world, displays either the most complete self-deception, or intentional hypocrisy. Let your hearts seek the teaching and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this matter. Not merely to abstain from doing that which may seem to be actual harm ; but to honor the name and the word of Christ, in an earnest and faithful religious walk among men ; making all your habits of expense, and indulgence, and display, those which become the simplicity of Christ, rather than those which are merely adapted to your earthly station, or regulated by your earthly means of gratification. Strive to do all things to edification, even to offend or injure no weak brother, for whom Christ hath died, or for meat to destroy the work of God.

4. A life of actual religious usefulness must be expected from those who profess their fellowship to be with Christ. You must return to bless your household. The fire must never go out upon your altar. A thankful enjoyment of redeeming mercy in your own souls

will create a deep interest for the salvation of the souls of others. Your mouth will be opened to speak for Christ. Religious conversation will be a pleasure, and the effort for religious guidance and instruction of others will be affectionately made. Never be content to live in your own family without exercising an influence for Christ. Look at the minds and hearts which are prepared and provided for you there, to bless and guide in the ways of the Lord. Be not content even with usefulness there. Look around you, and abroad, upon the souls for whom the Saviour died. Ah, how many can you gather for him? To whom can you personally minister his truth? To whom can you send it, by aiding others to go and tell the glad tidings of his salvation? Perhaps the Lord has called you to preach his Gospel yourself. Consider this question seriously, as a personal and most important question for you. If not, he has surely given you a circle of influence in which you may unite with his servants, in carrying

forward the plans of his Gospel for the salvation of men. He has given you means and opportunities in your own line of things, to give to some others the knowledge of his grace. Be never satisfied without carrying out his plans regarding you in this respect, and reaping the full measure of your harvest of usefulness in his church, as his gracious providence has set it before you. From whom may he look for the faithful, earnest, and continued efforts to spread his Gospel, which he requires, if not from those who have acknowledged themselves to be his servants, and have been fed by him with the spiritual food of his Gospel at his table? Let him not look to you in vain. Let not his church look to you without a constant glad response. Whenever he opens a door, into which you can enter with hope of usefulness, be always ready to say, "Lord, here am I, send me." Thus will your life be increasingly happy in his service; your fellowship with him the more manifest, as it is the more active; your hope in him the more sup-

porting; and your final meeting with him the more joyful and the more compensating to your soul.

5. A hopeful life, a peaceful, happy walk, are especially appropriate to your professed fellowship with Christ. The Gospel is intended and adapted to give you perfect peace, while your heart is stayed on him. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Cultivate a cheerful temper, founded upon an experience of the Saviour's love, and a dependence on his promises and presence. This is a most attractive light in the Christian's character. It gives honor to his Lord, as being in himself a sufficient and satisfying portion for the pardoned soul. It gives strength for every duty, patience in every trial, usefulness in every relation, happiness in every prospect, peace in every crisis of life. The Saviour brings you complete and everlasting forgiveness and justification. He gives this to you freely. He enables you by his own Spirit to know the things which are thus freely

given to you of God. Your path is clear,—your home is secure,—your Shepherd will never leave you, nor forsake you;—life is yours,—death is yours,—all things are yours;—O live as those who are rich, and full, and reigning as kings with Christ! Full of hope, full of peace, full of joy in believing, and fruitful in every good word and work to the Saviour's glory. Thus shall you adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things; and come in his appointed time, as a shock of corn in his season; to enjoy his presence, to abide forever in his love, and to comprehend with all saints that heavenly fellowship which you have with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

THE END.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND JUDGMENT.

* Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right ?
—St. Luke, xii. 57.



INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND JUDGMENT.*

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THE revelation of the Gospel places every man to whom it comes, upon the ground of his own personal responsibility before God. It gives him the right, and it lays upon him the obligation, of personal judgment, and personal voluntary action, in the great concerns of his own soul, as the dearest and most valuable privilege in the possession of man. It sets before him every possible advantage, it offers him every desirable means of improvement, for the welfare of his soul for eternity; and then requires him honestly to judge with the light he has received, and freely to act, according to the opportunities which have been presented to him. It connects also a responsibility with the exercise of this liberty of personal choice and judgment in religious things, which

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is the most serious and abiding responsibility that man can bear. It offers all the amazing privileges of clear intelligence of the will and character of God, and of free and acceptable access to the presence and favor of God, and then announces with great solemnity the principle—"For all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

The Saviour appeals to this right, and recognizes this responsibility in the text before us, St. Luke, xii. 57, "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" He addresses himself to the *people*, verse 54, "He said also to *the people*." They were accustomed to reason, and to judge with accuracy, of far less important and far more uncertain things, than the great and plain question of religious authority and interest, which He had set before them. "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say there cometh a shower; and so it is; and when ye see the south wind blow, ye say there will be heat; and it cometh to pass." The face of the sky, and the prospects of the earth, they could calculate for themselves, and they habitually calculated rightly. Now he had placed before them—the people of Israel—the ample evidences of his divine authority, in the displays of the wisdom and power which he possessed; he had submitted to them a question in which their everlasting personal welfare was involved; and he required of them their own faithful and

intelligent examination of the testimony which he had brought before them. He demands of them, why they did not renounce the blinding authority of the Scribes and Pharisees, which led them to reject his message and his mission, and even of themselves judge in the question which he had thus submitted to them—"Ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" His appeal is not to the church authorities of Israel, as if the people were bound to submit their judgments to them, but to the people themselves, in opposition to their authorities. This was a personal, individual question for each of them; a question, the decision of which was infinitely and individually important to each of them; and while they must bear the individual responsibility of its decision, they were bound to consider and decide it for themselves. If he were the Christ, they were to receive him as such, and to discern and embrace the salvation which he brought. This acceptance of him as the Christ the Saviour, was an individual, private interest and act for each of them. The whole welfare of their souls was involved in the question, and they could not avoid the responsibility of judging for themselves, and were bound to judge what was right.

I desire to speak of this duty of personal consideration and judgment in the great mat-

ters of divine revelation. It is at all times a duty, and a right, of unspeakable importance. It was never attended with more peculiar responsibility and consequence, than at the present time, and in our land and our church.

The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ claim this high privilege, in all the concerns of religion, and in all the questions of their individual relations to God, as an inalienable right and obligation. They are compelled in these relations to bear the sole responsibility before God. They must each answer for themselves; they must stand or fall to their own master. "If they are wise, they are wise for themselves; if they scorn, they alone shall bear it." The everlasting results of their own decision they must personally meet; and no man can give to God a ransom for his brother. They therefore claim, and they must be allowed, the right of exercising their own judgments, in all questions connected with this personal responsibility, under the instruction and guidance of that Blessed Spirit whose office it is to lead the Lord's disciples into all truth. They can allow no man to have dominion over their faith. Human authorities may be received as helps and ministers in the path of truth. But they must call no man master, on the earth. One is their master, even Christ.

If the Lord could so directly appeal to the people of Israel for a right decision in the immense question of the acknowledgment of his

own authority, with how much more justice and force may the appeal be now made to the people who are living under all the increased advantages of his perfected Dispensation ; who have in their possession the complete Scriptures given by inspiration of God, and are able to read and hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God—to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and thus to discern the mind of Christ.

I.—Let us first consider the proper limits of this obligation of personal judgment in religion, and define its proper operation. We speak of it in our present relation, as especially connected with the doctrines and duties of revealed religion. We are accustomed to call it, technically, the right of conscience ; that is, the right in every man to determine for himself, and within himself, unfettered by the authority of other men, his own proper line and course of personal religious duty. It is the privilege which is secured to every man by the sacred Word of God, of examining for himself the claims which are asserted upon his obedience and submission ; of determining for himself the proper degree and course of this submission, in all the things which constitute his personal relation to God, or affect his own eternal interests before God, the responsibility of which judgment and action he alone is to bear before the judgment seat of God.

1. It is the obligation to judge that which is right. It is a right founded upon divine authority, and is never, therefore, independent of that authority. When God has distinctly spoken to man, either in the teachings of revealed truth, or in a direction for personal duty, there every question is settled, and every claim for liberty from this divine authority is silenced.

This is undoubtedly the fact in regard to the positive divine commands. When God has said, "Thou shalt not steal,—thou shalt not kill," there remains no right of question or consideration to man. His line of duty is simple, uniform, and unmurmuring obedience. He has nothing to do but humbly and unchangeably to submit to divine authority. No choice is presented, or can be justly presented, to his mind.

This is equally the fact in regard to the clear divine revelations of truth. When God has spoken plainly upon any subject, man has no room for choice. When he says, "This is my beloved Son, hear him," or when he declares, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved,"—there is left to man no liberty of choice. So far as the divine authority is concerned, he has no question to consider. He has no right to reject or to postpone obedience to the undoubted voice of God. His line of duty is perfectly uncloud-

ed and distinct. What God has manifestly spoken, is right, and only right; and man is bound to conform to his mind and will, and of himself also to judge what is right. He has simply to satisfy himself that God has thus commanded or spoken, and then to yield completely to his word. His privilege of judgment, given by divine authority, acknowledges frankly the authority which thus directs and limits it.

2. It is an obligation and right of judgment not wholly independent either of the interests and claims of his fellow-men. It cannot be justly exercised to the destruction of the community of Christians in which he is placed, or to the contempt of the actual, revealed, and divinely-imparted authority of the outward visible church of God with which he has been connected. The social claims and interests of the Gospel are of vast importance. The unity of the body of Christ—even its external apparent unity—is of great consequence and value. The influence which we are to exercise upon each other, and which we do actually exercise upon each other, even in the great concerns of our everlasting salvation, makes up a very important portion of our present duty and of our future responsibility. There are acts of scriptural established discipline and government, in which we are bound to “hear the church;” to yield our own private will to the benefit of others, or to the common edification and to the

authority of the Christian community to which in the providence of God we have been subjected. St. Matt. xviii. 17, the Saviour directs us, in a case of specified individual difficulty, to "tell it unto the church;" and decides that the obstinate refusal to listen, or submit, in such a case, to the authority of the church, shall constitute a man an outcast from the privileges which it gives. "If he will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." The manifest intention of this is, that a man is bound in such a question of personal temporal interest or difficulty—not a question of religious truth or of divine revelation—to concede his own judgment and will to the edification and the decision of his brethren in the Christian community to which he belongs. In the influence of our whole course of religious faith and duty, we are to "seek the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another." We are to use all power and right, which has been intrusted individually to us, "for edification, not for destruction." We are to "mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine of Christ, and avoid them." Them which "*cause divisions.*" This is the guilt; not the division itself. Division becomes the resulting duty—"avoid them." How can this be, without division? We are to "endeavor to keep the unity of the

Spirit in the bond of peace," but not to sacrifice truth for peace.

The principle, upon which this required concession of our own judgment and will to the judgment of the body, and to the edification of others, rests, is very apparent. It is, our personal responsibility for the salvation of each other, in the degree of our appointed influence, and our duty to exercise upon others, the ministry for Christ with which each Christian is empowered. For this end, we are bound to unite with other disciples of the Lord, in an outward, manifest community, and to use our personal liberty as Christians in due regard for the spiritual and eternal welfare of other servants of our Lord Christ. We had better eat no meat while the world standeth, than to hinder, by our indulgences, the salvation of those for whom Christ died. In reference, therefore, to the spiritual welfare of our fellow-men, we are also bound to judge for ourselves that which is right; and the consideration and consultation of this, becomes a duty of immediate and imperative divine obligation.

3. The obligation and right of personal judgment, of which we speak, is the individual right of every Christian to examine and judge, by the standard of the infallible Word of God, all the religious teaching of men—all the inculcations of professed truth and duty, whether in the church or out of the church; and to receive, or to reject, the things which are brought

to him, by whomsoever they may be brought, according to their manifest agreement, or want of agreement, with this Word of God. The duty of every Christian man is thus to judge, for himself, what is right. The responsibility of this judgment rests upon him. The results of it he must meet and eternally bear. The right and privilege of it, therefore, should be guarded and defended by him with great solicitude and care. He is himself to see that his judgment is righteous judgment—that he judges according to truth—that he speaks according to the oracles of God. If he truly seek for guidance from God, and sincerely desire to do the will of God, he has the promise that he shall not be suffered to go vitally astray, and shall know, of every doctrine, whether it be of God. The meek will God guide in judgment, and teach them the truth of his Word.

II.—This obligation and right of personal judgment in religion, is founded upon the divine authority of the Word of God. The testimonies of the Holy Scripture upon this subject are very remarkable, and exceedingly full. Our present text is a very distinct testimony upon this subject. The Saviour presents to the people the whole subject of his mission to the earth, and the effects which it was to produce, and remonstrates with them upon their unnecessary ignorance, and sinful unwilling-

ness to judge according to the truth. In St. John, v. 39, he urges "the Jews"—the multitude of people to whom he was speaking—to search the Scriptures, for themselves, for the testimony which they contained concerning himself. The living authorities of the outward church of God were among them. But he deferred nothing to their authority, in a question like this. They had combined together to reject him, and the truth which he taught. And he directed the people, of whom these rulers were ready to say, they "knew not the law, and were cursed," to go from them to the written Word of God, to search, and judge for themselves what was right. St. John, iii. 10, the Saviour reproves Nicodemus, one of the best of these officers of the church of Israel, for his manifest ignorance of the Scriptures, especially upon the very subjects of their peculiar divine revelation—"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

The Saviour warns his disciples, St. Luke, viii. 18, of the responsibility attending this open publication of divine truth—"Take heed *how* ye hear." The privilege of hearing the Word of God is great, and men are to be held accountable for the spirit and state of mind with which they hear it. Nay, he warns them again, St. Mark, to "take heed *what* they hear." They are themselves made the judges of the teaching which they receive; and they are to be careful, in rejecting that which is injurious

and untrue, as well as in receiving that which is valuable and pure. St. Matthew, vii. 15, He commands them to beware of false prophets, describing thus those who professed to be teachers of religion. They are to judge of these teachers, not by their commission, but by their character, their manifest fruits. They are not to respect one that, by this testimony is evidently a wolf, because he comes in the garb of a sheep. They are to avoid him, to reject him, to beware of him. I know not how any passage could more clearly describe the right and obligation of which I speak. It is of no consequence what are the pretensions of men to authority. The conformity of their characters and teaching to the Word of God, is to determine whether they are to be rejected or received. And the people to whom they come are thus constituted, by our Lord himself, in the plainest possible terms, the judges of this fact. No outward authority can constitute a manifestly wicked man a divinely-commissioned teacher; and men are, unhesitatingly, to reject such an one, and to beware of him. Again, St. Matthew, xxiv. 23, our Lord warns his disciples against such men, in the doctrines which they teach, as well as in the fruits of their example. He directs them not to go after them, nor to believe them. These disciples are themselves constituted the judges of this false teaching, and of its opposition to the Word of God, and for this fact are to refuse it.

These are but some instances of the Lord's personal directions in this matter. He sends men thus to no infallible living guidance in the persons of other men, but to the standard of the divinely-inspired Word. And he requires them, according to this standard, either to receive or to reject the teaching which they hear. They are themselves to judge what is right.

The apostles urged the very same obligation and right upon all Christians. They constantly referred to the inspired Scriptures, for the proofs of their assertions of doctrine. The whole current of their public addresses in the Acts, from the 3d chapter to the 20th, furnishes numerous illustrations of this principle and habit. Their constant appeal is to the written testimonies of the Word of God. But every such appeal, of course, constituted their hearers the judges of the instructions which they received, and of the conformity of these instructions to those Scriptures which had been given them by Divine inspiration, and to which they thus referred. The guilt which was charged upon those who refused to believe, was the guilt of rejecting the written Word of God. In Acts, xvii. 11, we find the Bereans highly commended, even when inspired apostles preached to them, not because they humbly received new and unintelligible dogmas upon the mere authority of those who came to teach them, but because they searched the Scriptures, in a faith which would under-

stand for itself, whether what Paul and Silas taught them was accordant with that which God had previously spoken. They thus did the will of God, in judging of the doctrine, whether it were of God, or whether these men spake of themselves. How opposite was this searching spirit, which God commends in the Bereans, to the state of mind now so often commended, by those who deride this sacred right, and insist upon a mere implicit faith, from the people, in teachers of supposed Divine authority. St. Paul appeals to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. x. 15, for their own judgment in the question of the nature and purposes of the Lord's Supper,—a question which is often now represented as one of the most difficult and mysterious in the whole Christian system. "I speak as to wise men," he says; "judge ye what I say." He declares to the Galatians, ii. 5, his own determination always to judge for himself in these questions of religious truth and authority, and not to give place by subjection, even for an hour, to those who tried to bring him into bondage to mere human authority. Of these persons he says, in a very remarkable manner, "they seemed to be somewhat;" they had the profession and aspect, perhaps the station, of authority; but whosoever they were, it made no matter to him; God accepteth no man's person. The highest ecclesiastical authority, even James, and Cephas, and John, who "seemed to be pillars," were nothing to

him, in comparison with the sacred and settled Word of God. He urges the Galatians, v. 1, to unite with him in the same determination, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled by any yoke of bondage; nay, in the first chapter he bids them reject even an angel from heaven, who would set up another Gospel than that which the inspired Scriptures revealed. St. John, 1 Jno. iv. 1, exhorts Christians to a trial even of professed inspiration. He commands us to give no implicit faith to every professed teacher, because there were many false prophets already gone out into the world. In his ii. 10, he commands them not to receive teachers of false doctrine into their houses, nor bid them God speed, lest they should be partakers of their evil deeds. The Saviour commends the Christians of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 2, because they had tried and had rejected false teachers; and Rev. xx. 4, he pronounces an everlasting blessing upon those who had refused all connection with the corrupt and anti-christian teaching and dominion of Babylon, or papal Rome.

Now, these are some gathered illustrations, and divine securities, of this obligation and privilege of personal judgment in religion, among the many which the Holy Scriptures contain. They describe the duty and right, of which we speak, as made the portion of all the Lord's disciples. No man, nor men, nor

succession of men, can ever be allowed the authority, or permitted, in fact, to force upon us any religious doctrines or obligations, but upon the manifest testimony of the inspired Word of God. There you are bound to carry the instructions of every teacher; to try them by that standard; to receive and employ them, if they accord with it; to reject and renounce them, as having no light or truth in them, if they do not agree with that. You cannot too highly reverence the authority of the Holy Scriptures. You cannot be too firm in refusing to allow any teaching of men to stand upon the same level. In them God speaks to you, and he will not give his glory to another, and it is for you always, under their guidance and teaching, yourselves to judge that which is right. The connection of inspired Scripture with human teaching is perfectly precipitous. When you come from it to the highest uninspired man, you plunge from the hard land, at once, into the deep sea. And to whatever or whomsoever would assume the authority of inspiration, apart from this sacred testimony, you are to say, without hesitation, "Upage Satana" — "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

2. This important right of personal judgment, which God has thus given in his Word to all to whom his Word shall come, our own church acknowledges and secures, in the clear-

est possible manner. Here, in this church, at least, is there to be no dominion over the faith of men, other than that which the sacred Word of God shall manifestly appear to establish and impose. In the Thirty-nine Articles of our church, which every minister is bound to subscribe, as the summary of Christian doctrine which he is to teach, this privilege and duty of its members is provided for in the most decided and intelligible language. So that the church seems to take up the very demand of the Lord, as addressed to all who acknowledge its authority also,—“Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?”

Art. 6 declares that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of *any* man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” What, then, is the question which this church proposes to “any man”—to every one to whom professed religious teaching is offered—but “Can the doctrine which I now hear be found in Holy Scripture? or may it be proved thereby?” How is he to settle this question, but by searching the Scriptures to see for himself? He is to judge for himself that which is right. He is thus commanded to reject, and not to believe as an article of faith, everything which cannot endure this test. He is to prove all things, to hold fast that which

is good, and is himself made, of necessity, the judge of this all-important question for himself.

In Art. 8, the two creeds, which are short summaries of Christian doctrine, transmitted from the earliest—perhaps one of them even from the Apostles' times—are commanded to be “thoroughly received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.” Even these venerable symbols of doctrine are not imposed upon men by mere church authority, but are openly submitted to the examination and judgment of all, in this assertion of their Scriptural truth, and to be received from their conformity to this truth.

In Art. 19, the language upon this point is very precise and positive. “The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.” But here, again, the question whether the doctrine which is heard, and the sacraments which are ministered, in any professed church, are according to the pure Word of God, is of necessity left to every Christian, to examine and settle for himself. He alone is constituted the judge, by the very statement of the Article, which directs him how, and when, and by what marks, he may find the visible church of

Christ, with which he is to become connected.

Art. 20 is even more positive still upon this subject. "It is not lawful for the church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written ; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so, besides the same, ought it not to enforce anything to be believed, for necessity of salvation." But who is to be the judge? Who can be the judge whether the teaching which is heard from the church be according to God's Word written, or whether the ministers of the church do actually expound one place of Scripture repugnant to another, but the people, to whom the command is given, and for whom the exposition is made? With whatever antiquity, or apparent authority, manifest errors and unscriptural doctrines may be clothed, our Protestant church makes it the duty of its members to try them by the Word of God, and to reject them if they cannot endure that test.

I need not carry these quotations further. Our own church thus, in its avowed fundamental articles of faith, solemnly secures to all its members, and faithfully guards for them, the great scriptural right and responsibility of private personal judgment, in all questions connected with their religious duty and their indi-

vidual relations towards God. God has given us this right. Our church acknowledges and enforces its discharge, professing not to have dominion over our faith, but to be the helper of our joy. It becomes us, therefore, as members of this church, to maintain and exercise this right, with the utmost intelligence and information of the truth which we can bring into operation in connection with it, but never to yield it to any authority of man. We must try the spirits of professed teachers and prophets, whether they are of God.

III.—I wish now to bring the consideration of this general right into direct application to our own peculiar circumstances and responsibility.

There are two great systems and methods of professed religious influence and authority, which in different shapes have ever been contending in the world, wherever the promises and commands of a divine revelation have been proclaimed, and which are now mingling in a very remarkable contest and contrast in our day. We feel their pressure—we listen to their appeals—we hear their reciprocal proposals and demands every day, and in almost every religious relation. They press us, particularly, in the present discussions in our own church and the church of England. Between them we must judge, for ourselves, what is right. And, according to the command of our

church, we must carry the teaching of each to the Holy Scriptures, and examine them for ourselves by that infallible test.

The *first* system—which is an outward, sensuous system—teaches that man is to be saved forever, by an alleged personal union with Christ, exclusively through the outward sacraments and ordinances of the visible church; that a certain selected organization of this church is alone clothed with divine authority; and the man who would be saved, must submit his judgment and will to this authority, and look for his salvation in the appointments of this church.

The *second* system—which is an inward, spiritual system—teaches that man is to be saved by a spiritual union, or connection of his soul, with Christ, through the inward power of the Holy Spirit, enlightening, instructing, and sanctifying his individual mind and heart, by the agency of the Word of God; and that he is, therefore, to be guided solely by the simple authority of the Sacred Scripture, and has the right to hear its instructions, to examine its testimonies, and to judge of its precepts for himself.

The *first* would operate upon man for his salvation, by bringing him into a blind subjection to church authority, and a passive submission to church ordinances; and persuade him that thus, through outward material applications—I might justly say, if I referred to the follies of some modern books, through the

very absorbent vessels of his perishing body—he is to be made unconsciously one with Christ, by being one with that outward society of men who claim exclusively to belong to Christ, and to be the body of Christ.

The *second* would lead man to embrace the truth of God, in the intelligent and affectionate submission of his own will to him—to yield his mind and heart in joyful confidence, to Christ, by the inward conscious action of his own spirit, under the promised teaching of the Spirit of God; and thus to be made personally, spiritually alive, by a living faith in Christ, and then to unite in the outward sacraments of the Gospel, as a confession of the Saviour's name, and a profession of the life which he has already received from him.

The *first* would multiply formal services and outward imposing rites, to awe and influence the minds of men by their sensual authority; would impress upon them the peculiar importance and solemnity of this outward conformity, because grace is appointed to operate through its instrumentality, and cares comparatively but little for the preaching of the Gospel, or the offering of salvation to the minds and hearts of individual men.

The *second* would unceasingly preach to men the truth of God, especially the complete salvation and the glorious Saviour whom this word of truth reveals; would urge their intelligent and voluntary acceptance of Him as a

chosen ruler and portion for themselves, and their simple confidence in his worth and power, thus divinely revealed and perceived; and then would enjoin that measure of outward conformity to religious rites, which does all things according to the Saviour's will, and in obedience to his commands, decently and in order.

The *first* appeals to man to submit to an alleged perpetuated authority in this professed outward church; to receive its interpretations and impositions without question of their accuracy; to renounce all judgment of his own, as ungodly pride, in humble deference to this assumed inherited infallibility, and to esteem it a sufficient reason for his avowed faith and hope, that thus the church has taught.

The *second* presents to man, for his guidance and instruction, the inspired arguments and teaching of the Holy Scripture; bids him search and see for himself what God hath spoken, to allow his faith to stand in no wisdom of man, but in the power of God, and to receive or reject the teachings of men, and of all men, as he finds them to be, or not to be, accordant with the teaching of God.

The *first* brings to man, personally, a professed living ministry of men, declares its infallibility from error, requires his docile and unquestioning subjection to its teaching, and forbids all judgment of his own upon its authority or truth.

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church, we must carry the teaching of each to the Holy Scriptures, and examine them for ourselves by that infallible test.

The *first* system—which is an outward, sensuous system—teaches that man is to be saved forever, by an alleged personal union with Christ, exclusively through the outward sacraments and ordinances of the visible church; that a certain selected organization of this church is alone clothed with divine authority; and the man who would be saved, must submit his judgment and will to this authority, and look for his salvation in the appointments of this church.

The *second* system—which is an inward, spiritual system—teaches that man is to be saved by a spiritual union, or connection of his soul, with Christ, through the inward power of the Holy Spirit, enlightening, instructing, and sanctifying his individual mind and heart, by the agency of the Word of God; and that he is, therefore, to be guided solely by the simple authority of the Sacred Scripture, and has the right to hear its instructions, to examine its testimonies, and to judge of its precepts for himself.

The *first* would operate upon man for his salvation, by bringing him into a blind subjection to church authority, and a passive submission to church ordinances; and persuade him that thus, through outward material applications—I might justly say, if I referred to the follies of some modern books, through the

very absorbent vessels of his perishing body—he is to be made unconsciously one with Christ, by being one with that outward society of men who claim exclusively to belong to Christ, and to be the body of Christ.

The *second* would lead man to embrace the truth of God, in the intelligent and affectionate submission of his own will to him—to yield his mind and heart in joyful confidence, to Christ, by the inward conscious action of his own spirit, under the promised teaching of the Spirit of God; and thus to be made personally, spiritually alive, by a living faith in Christ, and then to unite in the outward sacraments of the Gospel, as a confession of the Saviour's name, and a profession of the life which he has already received from him.

The *first* would multiply formal services and outward imposing rites, to awe and influence the minds of men by their sensual authority; would impress upon them the peculiar importance and solemnity of this outward conformity, because grace is appointed to operate through its instrumentality, and cares comparatively but little for the preaching of the Gospel, or the offering of salvation to the minds and hearts of individual men.

The *second* would unceasingly preach to men the truth of God, especially the complete salvation and the glorious Saviour whom this word of truth reveals; would urge their intelligent and voluntary acceptance of Him as a

chosen ruler and portion for themselves, and their simple confidence in his worth and power, thus divinely revealed and perceived; and then would enjoin that measure of outward conformity to religious rites, which does all things according to the Saviour's will, and in obedience to his commands, decently and in order.

The *first* appeals to man to submit to an alleged perpetuated authority in this professed outward church; to receive its interpretations and impositions without question of their accuracy; to renounce all judgment of his own, as ungodly pride, in humble deference to this assumed inherited infallibility, and to esteem it a sufficient reason for his avowed faith and hope, that thus the church has taught.

The *second* presents to man, for his guidance and instruction, the inspired arguments and teaching of the Holy Scripture; bids him search and see for himself what God hath spoken, to allow his faith to stand in no wisdom of man, but in the power of God, and to receive or reject the teachings of men, and of all men, as he finds them to be, or not to be, accordant with the teaching of God.

The *first* brings to man, personally, a professed living ministry of men, declares its infallibility from error, requires his docile and unquestioning subjection to its teaching, and forbids all judgment of his own upon its authority or truth.

The *second* gives to man a really infallible Bible, and entreats him to examine it for himself, with the promised guidance of the Spirit of God to lead him into all truth, looking to a living ministry but as to an appointed provision subordinate to this divine teaching, to help him to understand it, and to assist him in obeying it.

The *first* directs him, when he is awakened in spirit and anxious in mind, to go to outward visible ordinances, to find his peace in an obedient conformity to them, bidding him to hope, and promising him salvation, as the result of his own continued submission to these prescribed duties and rites.

The *second* directs him to the already completed obedience and death of the Son of God, as the Mediator for man, offers him a perfect salvation in the infinite worth of that one sacrifice, and bids him to believe in his heart, in the truth and the adequacy of this glorious and sufficient mediation, and find an everlasting rest in the conscious confidence of his soul in Christ.

The *first* bids him to satisfy his inquiring mind by asking, Do I belong to the true church? teaching that Christ dispenses his blessings exclusively through its ministrations, and warns him not to be satisfied until he has adequately settled this question. For this fact, with strange inconsistency, it has to acknowledge the right and the obligation and the competency of the man's own judgment in himself.

Then it would limit the exercise of this judgment to a mere decision of this one question, and demand a voluntary subjection of man to the church authority which he has thus discovered—I might say, thus created—and a consent to be held in final captivity by that. He must frame the idol for himself, and then worship it as a supreme authority for him.

The *second* bids him inquire, Am I in Christ, through the Spirit? and for this, to examine, not the church, but himself; not the dry records of human assumption, but the living fruits of the Spirit in his own soul; not whether Jesus Christ is in an outward ministry, but whether Christ is formed in him, the hope of glory; knowing that Jesus Christ is in him, except he be reprobate.

The *first* teaches him that true religion is a corporate or partnership concern, in which he partakes by virtue of his fellowship with the true church, a fellowship commencing with his entrance upon this outward partnership in baptism; that he is in communion with Christ, because he is in communion with the church; so that in some way, this whole body being holy, the comparative deficiencies of some members may be made up by the abounding excellencies of others.

The *second* teaches him that true piety is his own individual, secret, personal concern, with the joys and bitterness of which no man can intermeddle; that the great privilege of the

Gospel is to bring him, alone, acceptable, and in peace to God, in Jesus Christ, in fellowship with him ; and however outward helps may be used and sanctified for his soul's comfort and welfare, no outward agency has the right to stand for one moment between his soul and a redeeming God.

The *first* proposes the church as the original, to which all obedient men are to be successively united. Of course, before the first man became obedient, this church was a mere abstract notion. But the blessing, nevertheless, is in this abstract church, and the individual man is only to get it by coming there.

The *second* makes the individual saved man the original ; and considers the church to be the subsequent collection and union of these saved men, to whom the Lord is pleased to add daily, in succeeding ages, those who are saved.

The *first* supposes the ministry to be the first appointed agency, and the church of God to be built upon that.

The *second* supposes the church of God to be first collected and called, and then the ministry to be given to it, for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ.

The *first* of these two systems is the animal, sensuous, ceremonial system of Idolatry, Pharisaism, and Popery ; and wherever it is to be found, and in whatever degree in operation, it is the same—the work of the enemy, to mimic,

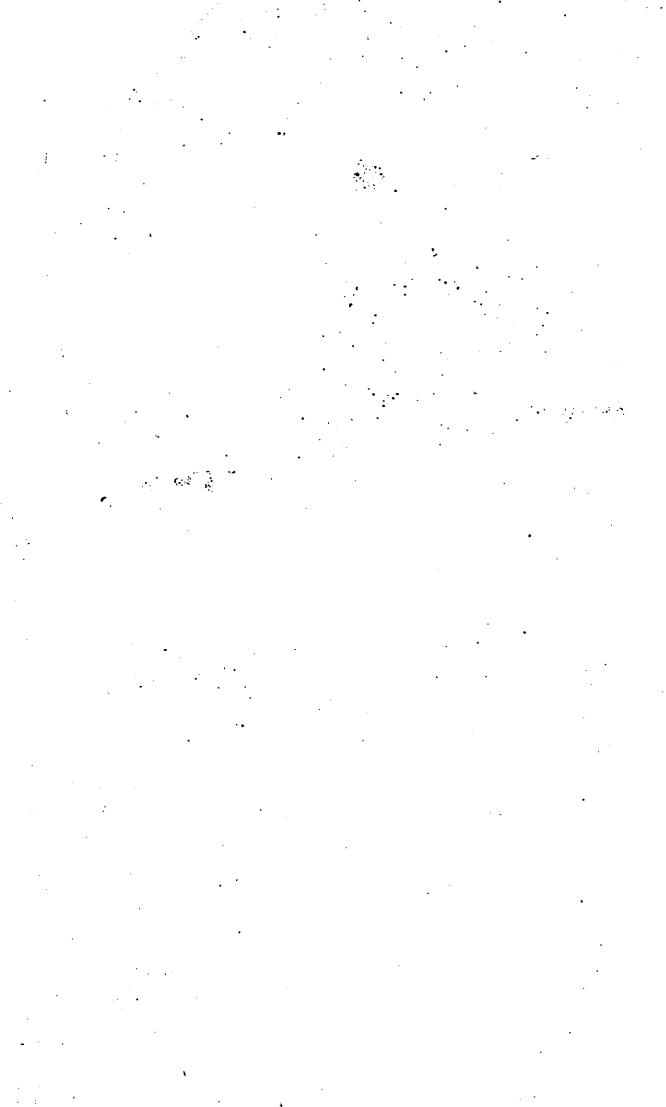
his chariot, in temporary victory over all the interests of righteousness, and truth, and God. The cloud of hope may be small. Be it so. The promise is in a higher hand than man's, and the believing soul will not be confounded or ashamed at last.

Need I say, that to take this stand of truth for God, is the great object and purpose of this Society. It stands as a beacon among us to call our attention to the safe and well-discriminated paths of Evangelical truth, and to warn against the bewildering, tortuous tracks of error, and the concealed pits of superstition and apostasy. We mean it to be a great witness for the truth in the church; the witness for a church that keeps the truth, in the world; and, the constantly enlarging agency, to spread in the church the knowledge, and love, and truth of Christ, and to extend in the world a church thus enlightened and animated by the clear knowledge and life-giving love of a divine Saviour. It is to help men to judge what is right, to urge them constantly to exercise this judgment, and to enable them to extend the knowledge of what is right to others, until, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon the work, our church shall be as pure in its visible members, as it is in its inherited standards of truth; and as powerful in its actual agency to save the world, as it is accurate and faithful in its recorded testimony to His power and glory by whom

alone the world can be saved. This is the ground of our union here, and this is the ground of our appeal to you and to others to help us in the great and important work for which we are thus united.

THE END.







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Fellowship with
Christ

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MAR 13 '86

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